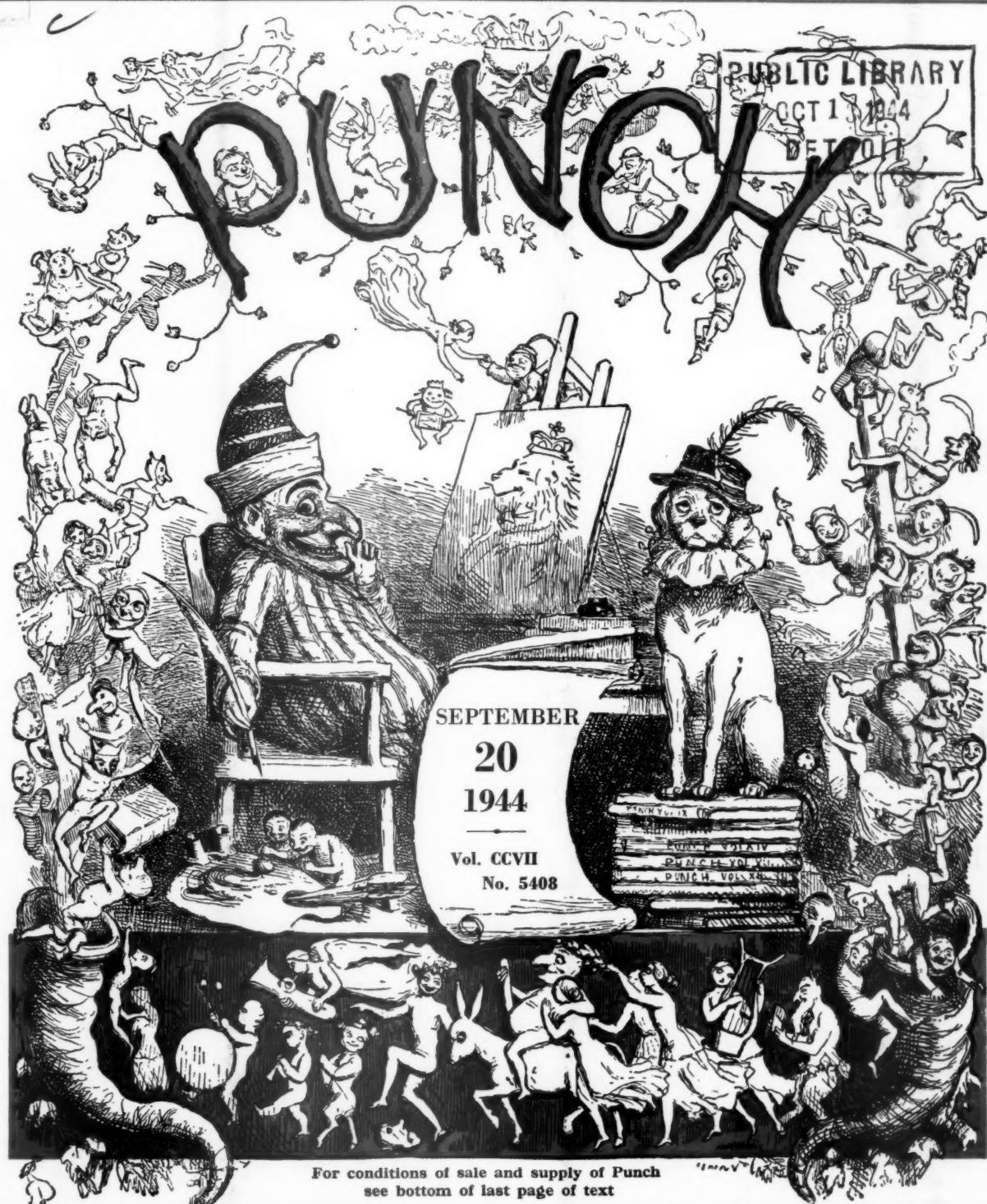




4H/128

*The need for Tyre Care is doubly necessary with*  
**SYNTHETIC TYRES**

— DUNLOP



For conditions of sale and supply of Punch  
 see bottom of last page of text

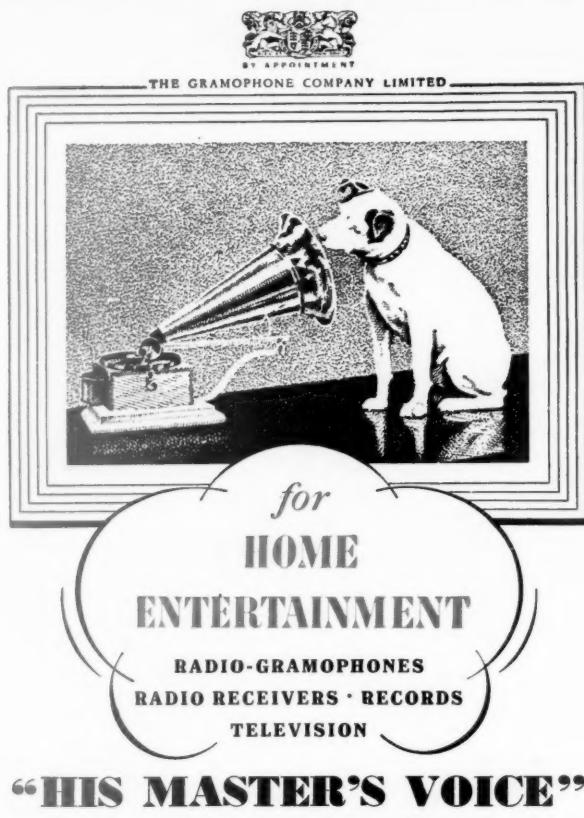
**“Triplex” — the safety glass**

September 20 1944

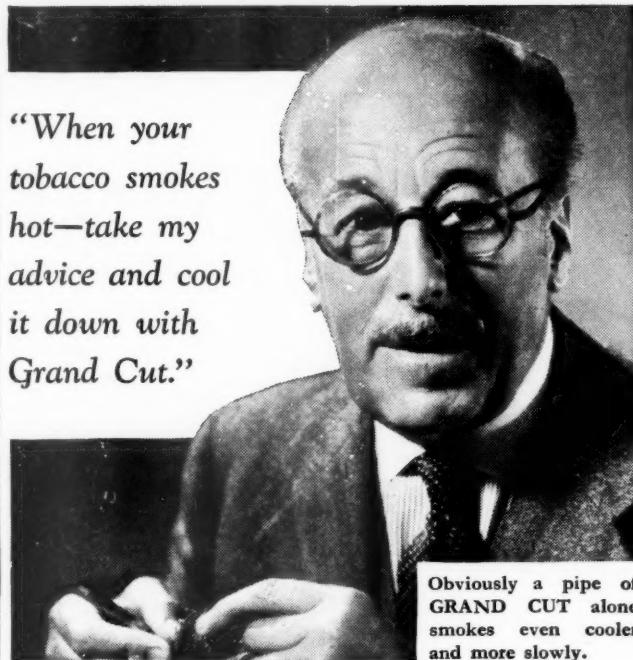
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BY APPOINTMENT

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"When your tobacco smokes hot—take my advice and cool it down with Grand Cut."

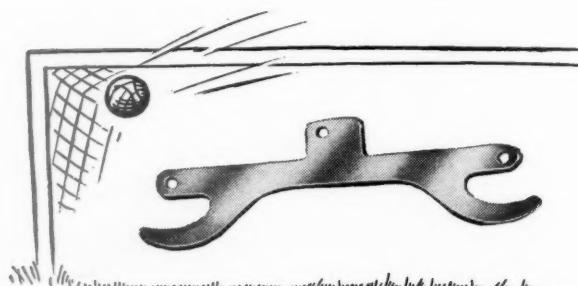


Obviously a pipe of GRAND CUT alone smokes even cooler and more slowly.

2 oz. **Grand Cut** 5/-

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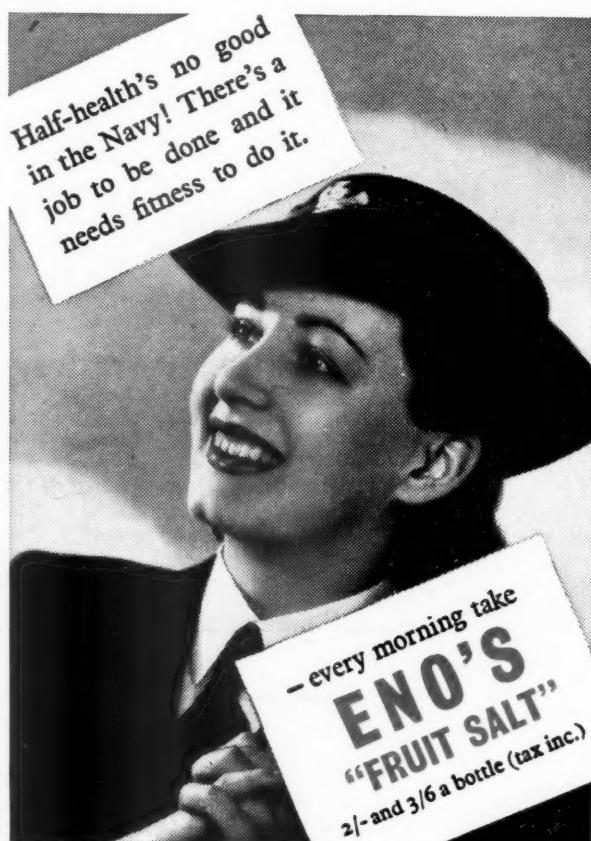
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and remember the infinite variety and inexhaustible supply of Things in 'Celanese'—for in looking back you will glimpse the future! The same restless and inventive spirit responsible for the 'Celanese' Products you already know, has responded to urgent war-time demands with amazing new Products. When Peace comes, these Products will be applied to civilian life and released to you in ample supply.

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**EDISWAN**

*will  
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with this  
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**CALEY**  
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## "THE HABIT OF SAVING MUST STILL BE ENCOURAGED"

(Government White Paper  
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SAVE FOR SECURITY THROUGH  
A PEARL WITH PROFITS  
ENDOWMENT ASSURANCE POLICY

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The amount could, if desired, be utilised for the provision of a guaranteed income.

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67



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standard by which  
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class foods are  
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ESTABLISHED 1760



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*Will the ladies for the Z-wow Pocket*

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**Yorkshire Relish**

THICK or THIN

Controlled Prices:

THICK - 11d. THIN - 11d. & 1/3d.  
Made by Goodall, Backhouse & Co. Ltd., Leeds,  
makers of famous sauces for 80 years

35

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WILL SERVE BRITAIN'S  
HOMES IN A  
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**Meanwhile - Save GAS**

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Without fuel not a plane, lorry nor tank can move, not a factory can produce: without food no soldier can fight, no worker can work. Fuel and food are vital, and the railways carry supplies where they are needed. The railways are an indispensable link in the chain of victory.

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GWR • LMS • LNER • SR

**With a SOUPLEX blade or a DOUBLE SIX You're shaved and spruce in a couple of ticks**

Millions of these famous blades go to the Forces on all fronts. Small supplies are available for the public from time to time. Souplex Ltd., Morecambe, Lancashire.

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**BOB MARTIN'S**  
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**keep dogs fit**

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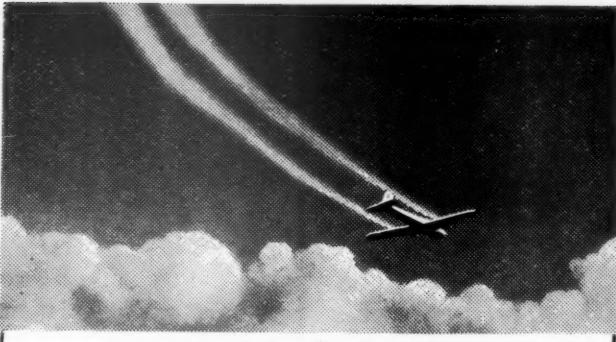
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is in the skies  
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Armed with huge precision cameras, our recon-  
naissance planes streak across enemy skies.  
They take their pictures from miles up, at  
hundreds of miles an hour—yet the pictures  
they take must show every important detail.  
'Kodak' Film helps to provide the answer. If  
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**FOR OUR  
THROATS SAKE**

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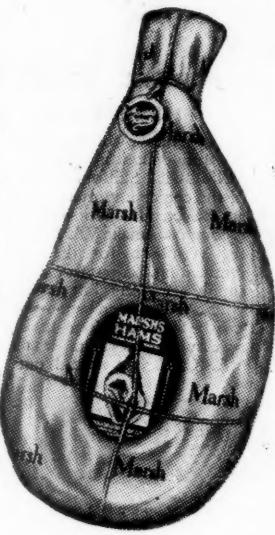
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*unfadable  
 furnishing fabrics*  
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● You can't get them now, but they will be produced again by Marsh's from sound well-bred stock reared by British Farmers. Something to which to look forward.



MARSH & BAXTER LTD., BRIERLEY HILL

The name "Meridian" on Men's underwear has ever been an assurance of the highest quality. Now, to that name are added the words "UTILITY WEAR," because it must conform to austerity specifications and prices. Always the best value for money—it is now the best value for coupons too.

J. B. LEWIS & SONS LTD., Nottingham. Estd. 1815. Suppliers to the Wholesale Trade

**A Link between  
 Nations  
 ALL THE  
 WORLD OVER**

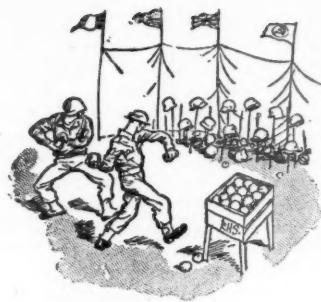
WHEN peace is restored the world will look to a closer understanding between the nations, to stronger bonds of mutual interest and to the swift resumption of those trade contracts which themselves so largely help to carry goodwill across international boundaries.

Popular all the world over, OXO will once more worthily exemplify the quality of British goods and the soundness of British taste.

**OXO**  
*Prepared from  
 PRIME RICH BEEF*

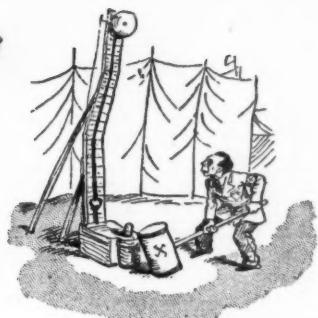
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# PUNCH

OR  
THE LONDON CHARI VARI



Vol. CCVII No. 5408

September 20 1944

## Charivaria

NAZI leaders have issued a call to the German forces to fall back and defend the Reich at all costs, but the *Wehrmacht* is beginning to wonder where they are speaking from.

We read that Mussolini finished his Memoirs with the aid of five secretaries. It must have seemed quite like old times to do some dictating.



A story was published in America that Hitler is secretly married. Well, there will be one merry widow he won't see.

"Fresh milk may be substituted for the milk powder and water." *Recipe in Sunday paper.*  
Oh, if you want to be *ostentatious* . . .

The recent boisterousness in the Straits of Dover was thought to have been the weather celebrating its liberation.

The typewriter of a New York journalist caught fire as he was using it. Apparently he was trying to catch up with the war.

"Michael Frame, who is doing secret work, puts his keys away. Emil, the little Nazi, watches, enthralled, as he tries to see where the keys are to be hidden, snooping and spying being part of the Nazi education."—*Picture caption in weekly paper.*

As you might expect.

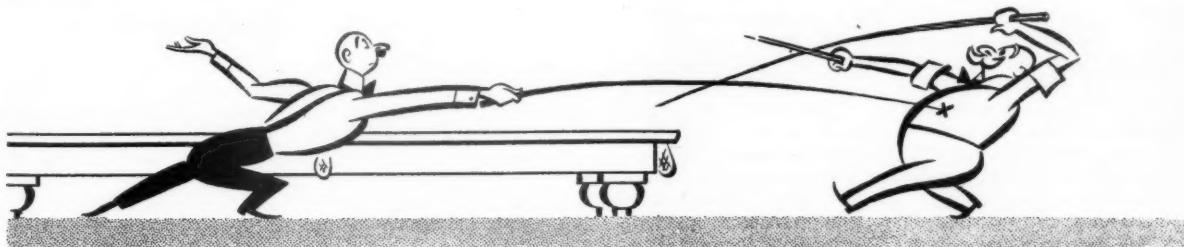
A German soldier captured in France was aged ten years. We understand he had deceived the Nazi authorities into accepting his services by saying that he was eleven.

The influence of films on young girls begins with the hair, says a schoolmistress. Especially those horror films.



A Londoner who was charged with being drunk and disorderly explained that he had been celebrating Allied victories. The authorities are inclined to take a serious view of the case, strongly suspecting the fellow of some sort of optimism.

Shortages have affected billiards, says a sports columnist. There have been many tough contests amounting to Utility Cue versus The Rest.



## *Bedtime Story*

ONG had it seen itself, hung there reflected,  
On cloudless days and blue  
Deep in the pool of the water-lilies  
Where the golden fishes lazily floated  
Above it and round and through:  
And not many noted, not many detected  
The fish of silver amid the golden  
Flung from the sky to swim there  
In the roots of the lilies dim there  
And even the goldfish had not beheld  
Something their own size, only fatter,  
Or else they thought that it did not matter,  
As goldfish often do;  
But the children at times would come with their  
nurses.  
(Nobody need go on with these verses)  
On a sunlit afternoon  
And half-believe it was swimming—living—  
In the pond of the pink and yellow lilies  
Till one who was wiser said “You sillies,  
It’s only the old balloon”:  
And now it was raised and now it was lowered,  
But never adventure! Nothing toward!  
It never exploded  
As some I know did,  
Or drove on the wind to Norrway,  
But dreamily hung there day by day  
Over the water cool,  
Till in the end they came and removed it  
Out of the sky and out of the mirror,  
And if I have happily made no error  
I do maintain and believe  
That though the children hardly remembered  
The silver fish that had lain there chambered  
(And the goldfish did not grieve)  
It went to fight in the battle of London—  
Now it had ceased to hang enchanted  
Now it had found the chance it wanted—  
To fight in the battle of Southern Britain,  
The tale half-told and as yet half-written,  
Guarding the island door,  
And died at last in the flame of its wishes  
Struggling with Hitler’s evil fishes,  
And a silver ghost there sometimes still is  
Down in the roots of the water-lilies  
Of a hero-blimp of the war. EVOE.

EVOE

## Efficiency

**E**FFICIENCY may be defined as doing something efficiently, or so that it not only works out right in the end but never looked like working out any other way. Thus it is not efficient, when you are mending a bicycle puncture, to make another puncture while getting the inner tube off, because it will then seem to the onlookers as if you will end with two punctures instead of none, particularly if the bicycle belongs to one of them. Even if you succeed in mending both punctures the onlookers will not be really satisfied; they will count it as no more than an artistic achievement. The efficient temperament,

then, is the opposite of the artistic, because artistic people take much longer than they need over something they need not have done anyway, while efficient people take no time at all over something forced on them.

It is difficult to assess which there are more of in the world, efficient or inefficient people, but it is safe to say that to the inefficient, who are used to being put upon, there seem to be more efficient people in the world, while to the efficient, who are used to having things their own way, there are more inefficient. So both sides are satisfied. But there are times when it is difficult to tell one type from the other. Philosophers have never been able to gauge whether it is or is not efficient to tidy a sitting-room when you are not expecting visitors. Some argue that it is extremely efficient because by expecting the unexpected—in this case visitors—we can actually prevent them, in accordance with the well-worn rule that the unexpected always happens. Others say that it looks like a waste of time to them, but that people sitting in a tidy room for no reason at all do certainly feel efficient, that is, unlike themselves. It is of course neither efficient nor inefficient to tidy a room up when you are expecting visitors. It is just normal. Where the inefficiency comes in is in pushing old shoes under the sofa and not realizing that Destiny will compel us to push the sofa back on an unforeseen wave of hospitality, thus exposing the tidying racket for what it is.

Tidiness is so closely bound to efficiency that I must say a few words about it. It does not, as we all know, count as tidiness to bung everything into a drawer and shut the drawer, but it is as good a substitute as man has yet devised. People who do this have developed an extra sense which tells them that when they have looked several times through a drawer for something they have not found, why they have not found it is because it has fallen down the space at the back; and, sure enough, if they look in this space they will find whatever they lost last time this happened. This is known, by the efficient, as lack of method, but it is really very methodical indeed, except for the time-lag. There are certain very efficient people who keep their papers in a sort of filing system with a paper-clip, and this, to the inefficient, ranks with getting coat-buttons sewn on every time they drop off, instead of every time up to three have dropped off, because it so obviously saves trouble as well as making it. It is impossible to be untidy about books, by the way, because the more you leave round the room the more you may assume other people to assume you can read at once. On the other hand it is impossible to be tidy about anything to do with eating. Scientists assert that if there is one thing more untidy than leaving a crumby table-cloth on a table it is leaving a plate of plum-skins and cigarette-ash on a crumby table-cloth.

So much for tidiness. Now for other branches of efficiency. I suppose the highest form of efficiency is the ability to answer the telephone by giving your own number instead of just saying "Hullo." Psychologists have long wondered why this should be so difficult, and all they can decide is that "Hullo" is what people say when they answer a telephone. The next highest form of efficiency is tying parcels. There are certain people who can produce a parcel which is square or oblong, hard to the touch and finished off with smooth white string; but they probably sit up late at night practising. The average person thinks a parcel good enough when the join at the back stays together long enough to get the string round, but it says something for human nature that after tying its parcel up it will spend some moments mentally subjecting the parcel to all it imagines the post office has waiting for it. If the



**"STAND EASY!"**



*"I bet Clacton's for it!"*

parcel does not pass this test, then human nature will do it all over again, and it will look just the same as last time. The next highest form of efficiency is known as having stamps. It is extremely efficient to carry stamps round with us so that we can sell them to other people; or rather it is extremely efficient for other people to carry stamps round to sell to us. It is possible to tell a stamp-carrier from a non-stamp-carrier at a glance, stamp-carriers being the ones we have had stamps from before. Psychologists say that once a stamp-carrier always a stamp-carrier, but they add the warning that anyone trying to set up as one too late in life is asking for disappointment, because it takes years to build the necessary goodwill. Other highish-ranking forms of efficiency which I must mention are: loosening your shoelaces before you put your shoes on instead of forcing a way in through the back of the shoe; not leaving empty match-boxes at their posts; and keeping a ruler in the house simply for the sake of the effect on those asking for one.

Now for a small form of inefficiency which is really circumstance, because we feel it is not our fault although we know it is. This consists of holding a string bag open for the greengrocer to pour two pounds of small potatoes in. By "in" I mean of course "through." After the greengrocer has poured them through three times, and picked them up off the floor twice, we find ourselves beginning to classify ourselves as the sort of person we should not like to be behind in a queue; in other words, we suddenly see ourselves as somebody else. This is

self-condemnation in the toughest degree. All we can do is make off with as many potatoes as have stuck in the bag. Another act of inefficiency is forgetting that paper carrier-bags are nowadays only given handles to remind us not to carry them by. Psychologists say that even they, hard-boiled as they have to be, find themselves moved by the sight of human nature trusting the handles of a carrier-bag.

Finally, I must mention washing-up, because it has become one of the most publicized forms of efficiency. Washing-up, perhaps more than anything else, gives enormous scope to efficient and inefficient alike. It is full of pitfalls, but it has all sorts of nice surprises like that proud moment when the stacker-up finds that the saucepan fits into the frying-pan. But what I wanted to mention was the extraordinary triumph which sweeps over someone who has just washed up the last three meals together. By the law of increasing returns, those who wash up three meals at a time, or rather those who have just finished doing it, are rendered nine times as happy as those washing up one meal; and this is why human nature will subconsciously leave its washing-up for the next three meals as well. Psychologists explain it as our eternal search for happiness; at least, they say, that is how they explain why they leave *their* washing-up so long.

The fact that goods made of raw materials in short supply owing to war conditions are advertised in this paper should not be taken as an indication that they are necessarily available for export.

## Lady Addle's Domestic Front

*Bengers, Herts, 1944*

MY DEAR, DEAR READERS,—It is so wonderful to know that I have been able to help my public with these cookery crumbs from my table, and it gives me real pleasure when they write and tell me so. "Experimenting with your recipes has enriched our silo no end," writes a plumber from Essex, and though I am not sure in exactly what way this was achieved, I rejoice to think I have helped him and his worthy family. Plumbers do a fine job, I think; always stopping leakages and making things flow more easily. If we could all do that in life, how much happier the world would be.

But I must get to this week's subject, which is jams and jellies and pickles. Perhaps I am specially qualified to write of these, for my old home, Coot's Balder, was famous for all of them. I remember one cook, Mrs. Cramp, who always produced the most beautiful glowing colours with her jams. We never knew her secret, which was closely guarded, until one day, when some greengage jam was in the making, my mother discovered her in the drawing-room in the act of snipping an olive-green chenille ball off a curtain. It then transpired that she had for years included in her conserves small pieces of stuff of a specially rich colour—a bit of crimson brocade here, an inch of blackberry-coloured gimp there—all cut with such consummate skill that it was impossible to detect the theft. "Ah, my lady," Mrs. Cramp said when Mama remonstrated with her, "there's nothing that makes a good jam like a piece of good material from a good house." My mother saw the force of this argument, and Mrs. Cramp was allowed to continue her snipping undeterred.

Not only could we boast of our colours but also of our variety. Nowadays people seem too apprehensive about wasting sugar to experiment, and hence some splendid ingredients wither in the fields and hedgerows for want of plucking. The common burr, for instance, soaked overnight and well stewed, makes an unusual jelly with a sweetish taste not unlike plate powder. Acorns, boiled to a pulp, will help to eke out your quinces if they are scarce. Then potato jam, with a little cochineal and some very fine grass seed for pips, with a raspberry jam label on the jar, does splendidly for people who have, either temporarily

or permanently, lost their taste. I find my evacuees always demand raspberry or strawberry jam, so I have been reduced to innocent little ruses such as I quote above, or sometimes to boiling up a pound jar of one of them with a pint of conker stock, which sets into two or three jars of a kind of jelly-ish jam, or perhaps more accurately, a jam-ish jelly.

I must stress the importance of your jelly cloth. Most cookery books recommend flannel for straining. I go further and say that old flannel is the best, especially some personal belonging such as an old flannel hot-water-bottle cover or a beloved dog's blanket, which seems in some strange way to give the jelly a very poignant flavour.

Now for pickles and chutneys. How well I remember the fascinating variety that used to be handed round at home. Puff-balls in peach brandy, Indian swamp chutney, pickled limpets—recipes guarded with the cook's life, who would sometimes, however, refuse even to pass it on to her mistress. As in the case of old Lady Umbrage, who gave her cook a silk dress, a canary in a cage and her fare from

Norfolk to see the Crystal Palace, in order to coax from her the secret of her wonderful Egyptian pickle which she had learnt from being in service with Prince Wafid el Rumfollah. When this failed, Lady Umbrage very reluctantly lowered her wages, locked her in the still-room for twenty-four hours, and finally dismissed her without a character. Even so, the stubborn old woman refused to give up her recipe, which died with her.

But the story does not end there. My mother used to say that when Connie Umbrage put her hand to the plough she made hay while the sun shone, and she was now determined, as she had failed to wrest the secret from her cook in life, that she would obtain it by other means. It was in the early days of psychical research and there was a famous medium, Madame Bacteria, who was much patronized by Society at the time. She was supposed to be controlled by Cleopatra's asp and she always slept with two mummies on her bed. What more likely person, Lady Umbrage argued, for getting an Egyptian recipe either from the cook, or from Prince Rumfollah, also deceased? Mipsie, who is always so ready to help anyone in trouble, promised to arrange the whole thing beforehand, as Lady Umbrage was a little nervous of the strange atmosphere of a séance. Accordingly they arrived, and almost immediately, I gather, Cleopatra's asp came through and introduced Prince Rumfollah. He said that the cook still flatly refused to pass on the secret but he would do so himself if Lady Umbrage would first take off all her rings and pass them to the person on her left—who happened to be Mipsie—as an expiation of her treatment of the cook. This done, he proceeded to give the recipe, which was an exceedingly complicated one, involving sending to the Sahara for a special kind of cactus. However, Lady Umbrage obeyed the instructions to the letter, though they cost her endless trouble and expense. The curious thing is that the pickle, when made, did not taste in the least like the original. The mystery has never been explained, but I think myself that the whole episode was probably meant as a lesson to Lady Umbrage not to dabble in the occult.

M. D.



"Let's see whether I've got this right, now: 'Downstairs, Mr. and Mrs. Morrison go out to the Anderson; upstairs, Mr. and Mrs. Anderson come downstairs to the Morrison.'"

"Wanted furnished house or flat, over stable. Or hut."—Advt. in Somerset paper.

Dog-kennel—take it or leave it.

## Table-Talk of Amos Intolerable

### IX

AMOS always says that autobiographies bring out the worst in him, and although there is no proof that his caustic (and usually interchangeable) expressions of opinion about them are invariably prepared in advance, the fact that a book is an autobiography practically guarantees that his expressed opinion about it will be caustic.

I strongly doubt, for instance, the impromptude—his own word (if any)—of his summing-up of a recent autobiography which he contrived to finish reading, or to appear to finish reading, in our presence. Jerking his head sideways at the portrait on the dust-cover, he said: "That man's life would make a good book."

Mention of autobiographies reminds me of a story he told about his early days in the office of a literary agent. He said that one day there was a tremendous disturbance in the outer office, and he opened his door to look out. "There were the office-boy, and the commissionaire from the main hall downstairs," Amos narrated, "restraining a big man of exceedingly tough appearance—a wrestler, I believe—who was trying to burst his way in to see the boss. He had a short heavy stick in one hand and he was yelling over and over again 'Show me the man that put all them hanging participes in my autobiography!'"

Occasionally Amos will preface some reversed epigram or twisted platitude with the announcement "Here comes one of my Flashy Definitions," but in spite of this phrase he is always offended if the Definition does not get as much approval as he thinks it deserves. He was very much annoyed once when, after he had boomed out "Diplomacy is the continuation of war by other means," a cantankerous dyspeptic-looking sailor who had been arguing with people all the evening suddenly turned and shot at him "Who in thunder ever asks what *diplomacy* is?"

It is one of Amos's firmest principles that any excuse will do if it is put over with enough assurance. We once heard him say instantly and firmly, when called to the pub telephone to answer a lady who invited him to lunch: "No, I'm sorry, but Thursday is my day for emptying the tobacco-crumps out of my cigarette-case."

"But didn't she argue?" we asked when he came back to the table after hanging up; and he replied indifferently, "I dare say."

Another time he refused to buy a copy of the *War Cry* because (he told the importunate lady) he had just had his hair cut.

He is profoundly sceptical about the prospects of what is customarily called a Better World After the War. "A lot of my very wealthy friends," he said not long ago, making us wonder where he kept them all hidden, "talk apprehensively as if the post-war world were likely to bristle with sign-boards reading 'Prosperers Will Be Executed.' They seem to be genuinely afraid that they are the last of their kind. Myself, I'd as soon worry about the possible extinction of grass."

He is in fact constitutionally pessimistic, and always

contrives to throw the dead cat, or at least the old boot, of doubt into the flashing stream of optimistic chatter. "The most I will admit," he said recently when cheerful forecasts that the war would be quickly over were flying about, "is that this may be the thin wedge of the end."

Always much irritated by factitious enthusiasm, Amos is usually very hard on people who describe things with what he considers unjustified vivacity. An otherwise inoffensive little man in goloshes who joined our circle for one night only annoyed Amos by the extreme animation with which he narrated the somewhat common-place incidents of a country walk he had recently taken. His climax was "And what do you think? I spotted a great woodpecker!"

Amos lowered his eyelids, drew down the corners of his mouth, blew out some smoke and commented "A work of supererogation."

He will always take any opportunity of jeering at publishers' and reviewers' clichés, the hollowness of which, he says, is usually exposed if one tries to work out exactly why they stop where they do. Thus once when reading an advertisement he said "Ten thousand sold before publication," eh—you notice they keep quiet about how many were sold *after*. . . . Another time he contemptuously read out from a review, "His place is secure," and added "But even this chap hesitates to tell you where it is."

He has no illusions about his own place in the literary world. I have heard him begin sadly, "My fans, who can be counted on the nails of one finger—" R. M.

## To Corinna

(On Putting Back her Watch an Hour)

AGAIN, now wanton summer's done,  
Corinna, on the patient sun  
"Tis time thy second trick to play  
Before he takes his punctuall way,  
And long-delaying greets the morne  
With shadows o'er the stubble corne,  
Or, with the hasting-on of time,  
Scarce thaws, at noone, the glist'ning rime  
Along those boughs where blossoms were  
In April summer's harbinger.  
So now, upon thy diall's face  
Arrest, an hour, his onward pace;  
And since what thou didst thieve before  
Thou dost with equall hand restore,  
Thine olde deceit forgetting, he  
Shall this new cheat give back to thee:  
He will, awhile, forgoe his power  
To make thee older by an hour,  
And thy brief beauty still shall stand  
Untouch'd by his bereaving hand;  
While thou, sweet tousel'd sleepy-head,  
Dost waste thine extra hour in bed.

## Holiday Exercise

WHERE is the bicycle of my sister-in-law?  
It is leaning against the wall of the garage of the house of my brother-in-law.

Where am I?

I am leaning against the wall of the house of my father-in-law.

The distance from the house of my father-in-law to the house of my brother-in-law is more than three kilometres but less than two miles.

Someone must go to the shop. The shop is eight kilometres from the house of my father-in-law and seven kilometres from the house of my brother-in-law.

There are ten people in the house of my father-in-law. Four are too busy to go to the shop. One is too tired. Three are too young as yet. My brother-in-law is too lazy.

I must go to the shop.

There is no form of public transport available. I walk to the house of my brother-in-law. It is hot. The house is empty. The door is locked. The key is in the pocket of my brother-in-law.

I walk back to the house of my father-in-law. My brother-in-law laughs brutally. He gives me a key. When I return to the house of my brother-in-law I find that it is the key of the house of my father-in-law. My brother-in-law has a playful disposition.

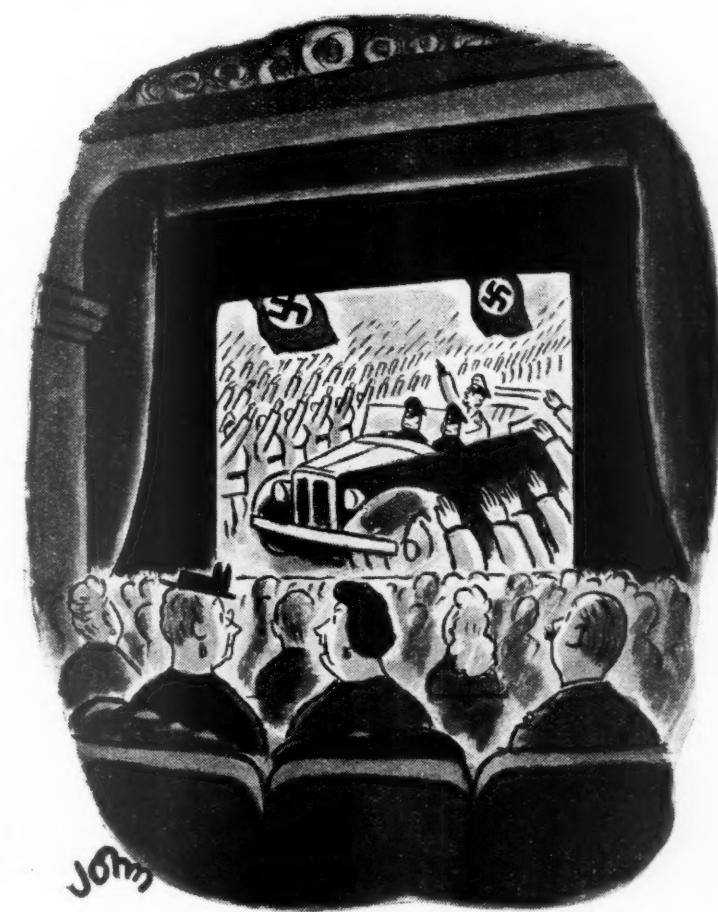
Through a window of the house of my brother-in-law I see the key of the garage hanging on a nail. I smash the window and get the key. Soon I have the bicycle of my sister-in-law.

The bicycle of my sister-in-law is small. The tyres often need pumping. The seat is hard and its shape by no means conforms to mine.

I ride seven kilometres to the shop. On the way I conceive a distaste for the bicycle of my sister-in-law. I address it disparagingly. I call it my bicycle-in-law.

The shopkeeper smiles and hands me a birthday-cake. It is for the birthday of my eldest daughter. The shopkeeper smiles again and says he is sorry he cannot spare any paper. He has not yet read to-day's and he has no other.

The birthday-cake is large and fragile. I cannot ride with it. I consider for twenty-five seconds. I decide that it is better to walk eight kilometres with a birthday-cake and a bicycle than seven kilometres with a birthday-cake and a bicycle and three kilometres with a birthday-cake but no bicycle.



*"I'd have stopped him in 1936, wouldn't you?"*

In this district it is unusual to see a tall man walking eight kilometres with a small lady's bicycle and a large birthday-cake surmounted by seven candles. Many of the inhabitants accompany me. They think I am a special attraction put out by the authorities as part of the local Holidays-at-Home programme.

When I return to the house of my father-in-law the birthday-cake is still almost in one piece. Much of it is quite clean. There is applause at my entry. When I tell my story the applause is redoubled.

My brother-in-law does not applaud. He is angry. He puts on his Home Guard uniform. He pushes me into his car. He drives me without mercy to his house. He tells me to board up the broken window. He insists on my getting cracking.

My brother-in-law says that he cannot drive me back to the house of my father-in-law. It would be against the law. His duties take him elsewhere.

Where now is the bicycle of my sister-in-law?

It is leaning against the wall of the house of my father-in-law.

And where am I?

I am leaning against the wall of the house of my brother-in-law.

The bicycle of my sister-in-law and I have merely to change places. For the bicycle this is a piece of cake. For me it is more like a cake-walk. Or perhaps an unusually difficult translation.

○ ○

*"THE IDEAL ARMY LOAD CARRIER"*  
*Headline "Commercial Motor."*

The P.B.I. ?



*"I'm just going to show Mr. Minty round the garden, Charles—if I can find a spare hoe."*

### A Time for Rejoicing

"**N**EVER mind," I said, as we came out yet again into the damp, dark evening, "it's still only twelve minutes to nine. Let's try the next one; I know they have one there."

Towards Mr. Bostock, who is roughly twice my age, I always feel rather fatherly. He trotted along with his macintosh flapping out behind him. He said that it was a curious thing, but at one time it had been almost impossible to enter a public house without being all but blasted out of it by wireless sets, and now . . .

"Here we are," I said, and led the way down the cobbled yard of the "Three Tuns." The saloon bar was filled with laughter and smoke and people. We found seats over against the far wall, slightly out of the darts players' line of fire.

"Good," said Mr. Bostock, gazing with approval at the glossy receiving set in the corner and beginning to polish the steam from his spectacles. "I hope it's in working order."

I assured him that I had with my own ears heard a Handley programme on it the day before. "Splendid," said Mr. Bostock. He peered about through the smoke. "To look at them," he said presently, "one would never believe that these people had endured five years of war, would one? And yet I suppose it has been like this every Sunday night for the last five years. The Battle of France, Dunkirk, Battle of Britain, the blitz (as they called it), flying bombs . . . and now . . ."

"Two Scotches?" I said respectfully to the man with the tray.

"No Scotch," said the man.

"Gin?"

"No gin."

"Any spirits at all?"

"Only port," said the man, no doubt under the impression that he was answering the question.

Mr. Bostock said that as far as he was concerned the drink was the merest incidental, and that he would be delighted to have just a small glass of bitter.

"Two milds," said the man, and prised his way towards the bar.

". . . and now," said Mr. Bostock, "it's all over."

"As good as over, anyway," I said.

Mr. Bostock beamed, raised his little smudgy eyebrows and sniffed the air noisily, as if the scent of victory were actually to be drawn into the lungs with the fumes of ale and tobacco. "What a wonderful time this is!" he said. "Why, the people even look different. And why should they not? Hitler's Europe a thing of the past; his very Germany crumbling; France, Holland, Belgium liberated, British and Canadians and Americans tearing across the continents like hounds let loose . . ."

"Hinds," I said—"isn't it?"

"Whatever it is," said Mr. Bostock, unoffended. "And the Russians . . . amazing, amazing. It wouldn't surprise me, at nine o'clock"—he nodded towards the wireless—"to hear that the Americans and Russians were both in Berlin—marching in from opposite ends."

I said that I didn't know about that.

"But the pace they go!"

"They certainly have been moving," I said.

"Why," said Mr. Bostock, "the correspondents say that their dispatches are out of date before they're in the post—or however it is that they send them."

"Cheero," I said.

"Your very good health," said Mr. Bostock, taking a feverish sip. "What is the time, please?"

"Five minutes to."

"Five minutes." He suddenly struck a fist on his bony knee. "My word, I'd give something to have a glance at that announcer's script to-night! It wouldn't surprise me to hear that they've got Hitler!" He turned to me. "Do you know, I have had a *horrible* day to-day: my wireless run down, no afternoon or evening papers. I think Sunday is a dreadful day at a time like this!"

He stole another glance at my watch and then set himself steadfastly to observe the people. The customers of the "Three Tuns" certainly seemed in victory mood on this wonderful wet Sunday night. The darts fluttered and plopped, glasses tinkled, pin-tables zinged and flashed. No single conversation was intelligible in the common uproar, but laughter was everywhere. A number of stout ladies near the bar were singing.

"It is wonderful," said Mr. Bostock—then he suddenly seized my sleeve. "I suppose they'll put it on?" he said. He thrust the disturbing thought away manfully. "But of course!" He laughed a short laugh. "It would be more than their lives are worth not to diffuse the nine o'clock news. It is a considerable time since I was in a public house in the evening, but I recollect that in the days of the blitz (as they called it) the 'Adam and Eve' near my brother's house in Bromley was virtually boycotted because the wireless set went out of commission. The proprietor lost heavily over it, I believe, through no fault of his own."

"It's two minutes to," I said, although he had not actually asked the question aloud.

The man with the tray passed very close to the wireless. On his way back he almost stopped, but it was only to take



*"Bit o' luck—case demolished."*

a couple of pint glasses from the top of the cabinet and to administer the habitual flick with his duster.

Mr. Bostock was becoming agitated. "I think perhaps, to make absolutely certain . . ." He waved to the man, who slowly began to force his way towards us. He slapped at the tables and collected glasses as he approached.

"No more mild," he shouted as soon as he was within communicating distance—"only old."

"Well," said Mr. Bostock, "we—er—"

"Two olds," I said. After all, we could hardly say bluntly that we only wanted to hear the news.

"I do hope he's quick," said Mr. Bostock, fidgeting furiously. By some freak of fortune the man with the tray brought the two olds almost at once.

"Look," I said, handing over a generous coin with the furtive air which indicates to the initiated that no change is expected—"what about the—you know . . ." I tapped my watch, turning my wrist so that he could see the time.

"Open till ten," said the man, turning away.

"No, no," whimpered Mr. Bostock—"it's a minute to nine, don't you see?"

Plainly the man thought Mr. Bostock had taken a little too much to drink. "Get along with you," he said, without venom, and began to move off.

I seized him by the roll-up of his shirt sleeve. I showed him my watch again and pointed to the wireless. "Quick," I said—"switch it on, there's a good chap, or we shall be too late."

"It's nine o'clock," panted Mr. Bostock.

"Switch on?" said the man, puzzled.

"The wireless," I said.

"The wireless?"

The man with the tray turned to us a damp, simple face, the sort of face whose damp simplicity a million men were battling their way across the world to preserve; at that very instant, as he stood there in the saloon bar of the "Three Tuns," the wet red ink of history was being splashed over the pages of mankind's most astounding chronicle; continents were bursting their bonds and rising from a living death, the wicked men were toppling to their doom, the blinding light of freedom was circling the earth with a glorious halo. . . .

That was what Mr. Bostock (who is not used to strong drink) said a few minutes later when we were outside again in the rain. All the man with the tray said was, "The

wireless? Why, is there something good on?" And as we stumbled towards the door he continued to shout after us, almost apologetically, only intermittently audible above the singing and the laughter and the zinging of the pin-tables—"if there was something good on . . . but they 'owl it down . . . break the glasses . . . unless it's something good . . . like Itma . . . Bing . . ."

"Peace," said Mr. Bostock, pausing at his garden gate. He shook his head. "I sometimes wonder whether we shall be able to take it."

I felt very fatherly.

"There were some people who thought that about the war," I said.

But he only shook his head again as he crunched away up the little gravel path. J. B. B.

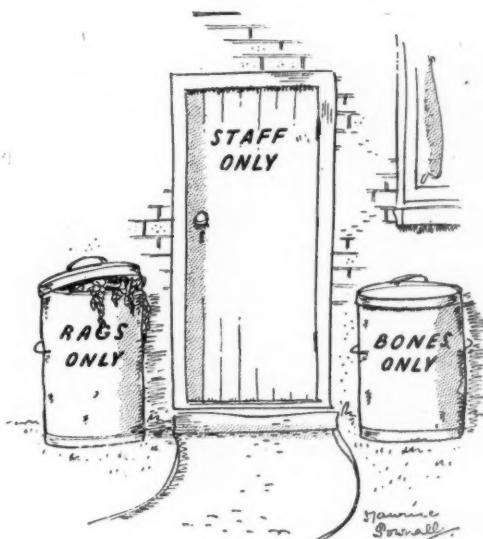
## Nanny

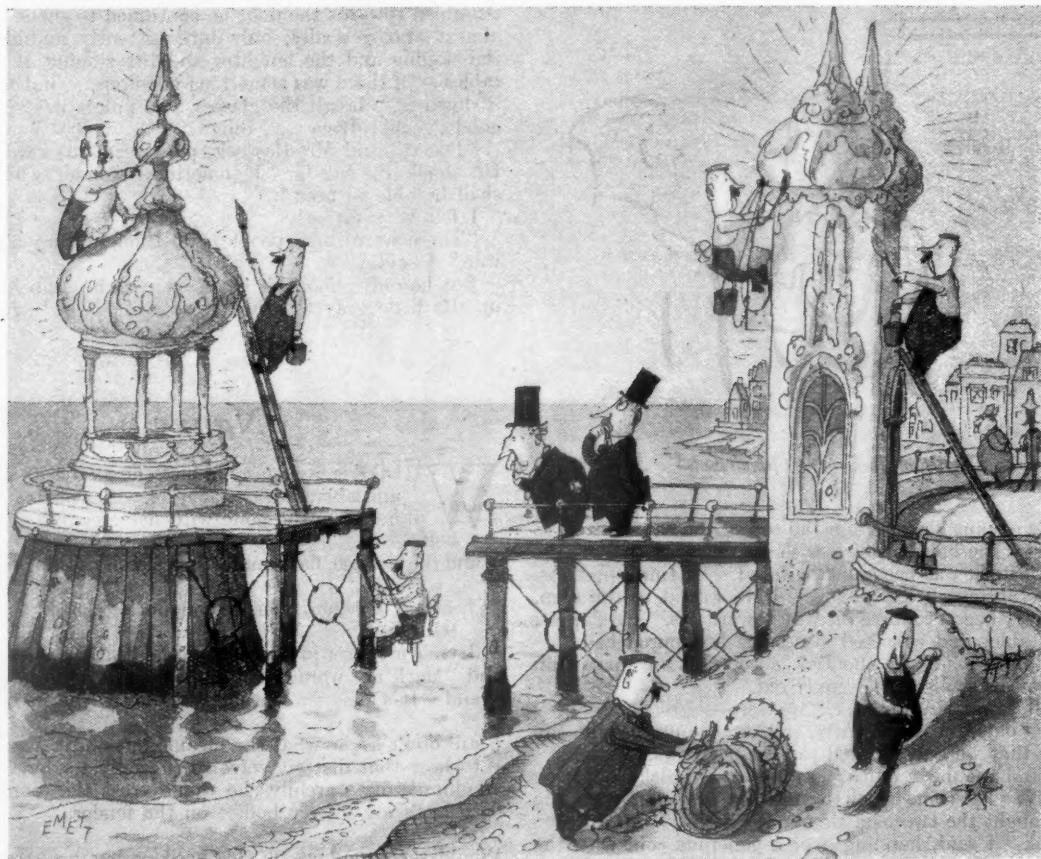
WHERE is my nanny in her long grey coat and skirt, and a black straw hat stuck with a pin to her head? Where has she gone with her creaking petersham belt, and the strange, flat, comforting, senseless things she said?

"Cheer up, chicken, you'll soon be hatched!" she would tell me, drying my ears in a rough methodical way, and "Mark my words, it'll all come out in the wash," and "It's just Sir Garnet Wolseley!" she used to say.

I still don't know what she meant, but oh, it was nice to hear that distract voice so ruggedly tender, as glimmering starchily she would cross the room to hang my liberty bodice on the fender.

Would she were here on this perilous bomb-scarred night, as warm and satisfying as a loaf of bread, to stand like a round shield between me and the world, to give me a bath and carry me up to bed. V. G.





*"Splendid! but I WISH someone could remember where we put the bit we took out in 1940."*

### Question-Time

**O**H, where shall I my true-love find?  
Breathes there the man with soul so dead?  
Have I been so beguiled as to be blind?  
If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?  
Oh, wherefore shall I busk my head?  
Had she come all the way for this?  
Was ever darkness like to this?  
Ends all our month-long love in this?  
But where is County Guy?

And is this Yarrow—this the stream?  
Stands the church clock at ten to three?  
Was it a vision or a waking dream?  
Whither is fled the visionary gleam?  
What care I how fair she be?  
Shall we not meet as heretofore?  
But was I sober when I swore?  
What are the bugles blowin' for?  
And shall Trelawney die?

What are those lights so many and fair?  
Where art thou, my beloved son?

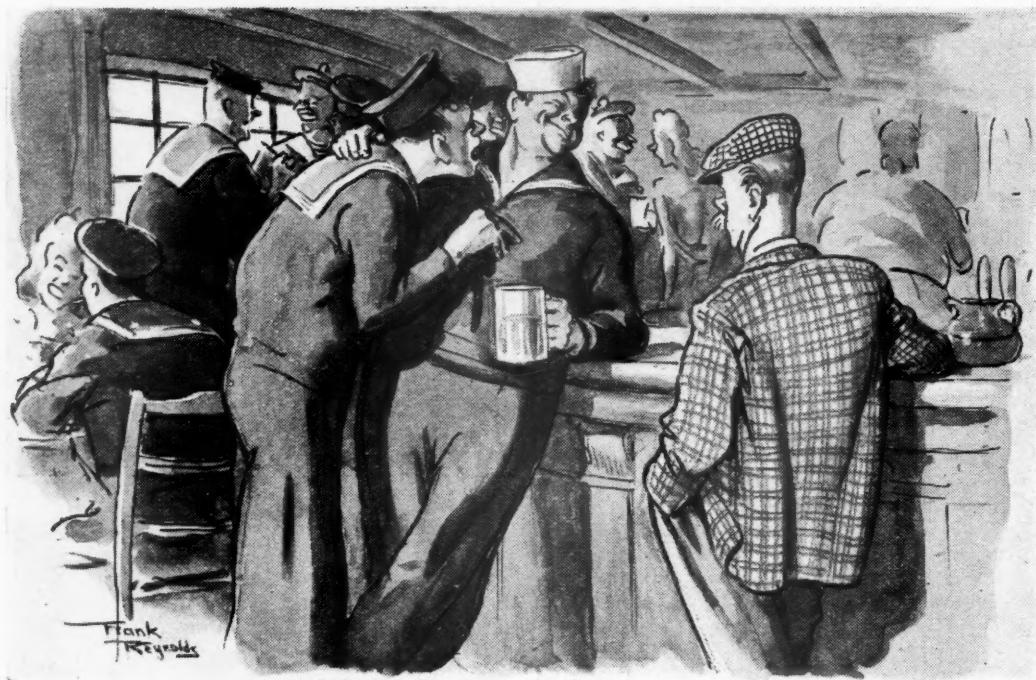
Alas! what boots it with incessant care?  
Oh, is it weed, or fish, or floating hair?  
Is there no life but these alone?  
Children dear, was it yesterday?  
Where shall we gang and dine to-day?  
Does the road wind uphill all the way?  
Playing on the virginals, who but I?

Oh, Cuckoo, shall I call thee bird?  
Art thou rich, yet is thy mind perplexed?  
What is it thou hast seen, or what hast  
heard?

What noble Lucumo comes next?  
What female heart can gold despise?  
A hundred summers, can it be?  
Where shall I hide my forehead and my  
eyes?  
Who is the happy warrior? Who is he?  
Now who will stand on either hand?  
Or is she known in all the land?  
Law! wot do they understand?  
So runs my dream, but who am I? J. B. N.



MORNING



*"You don't have to call every guy 'Doc'—some of 'em ain't!"*

## Are You a Born Leader?

**T**HIS test has been designed as a supplement to the Fleming Report. If you can answer five questions satisfactorily you are what we may call the public-school type. There are thousands of men walking the streets of London to-day (or riding when they can get taxis) who do not know whether they are born leaders or not. Some of them are holding back when they should be grasping reins and nettles: some are trying to win three pips in industry when they should be hewing wood and drawing water. It is all very uneconomic and puzzling. This test, then, should help you to know yourself. When you do, let acquaintance ripen slowly into a real and lasting friendship.

1. An analysis of the characters featured in children's comics shows that 31 per cent. are humanized animals. The rest are gangsters, Martians, airmen and conjurers. What social significance do you find in the fact that all reference to trade-union leaders and stockbrokers is carefully omitted?

2. Describe briefly (no rulers) how

to make hay while there is ten-tenths cloud.

3. In an ecstasy of vernal excitement the poet Rupert Brooke once proclaimed that he could kiss a thousand girls and drink a thousand beers. On the assumption that one normal kiss equals one pre-war beer find the value of one double-cheeked embrace from Mussolini in terms of black-market Chianti.

4. A branch of my neighbour's plum tree overhangs my garden. The branch has no fruit on it. Have I the legal right to haul on this branch until a fair share of the fruit is on my side of the fence? If so, am I entitled to a share of the windfalls in my neighbour's garden?

5. The Old Lady of Threadneedle Street recently had a birthday. In an interview she gave her age as two hundred and fifty only. What do you think?

6. The term "by and large" is growing in popularity. Other things being equal, can you, all things considered, define its meaning, so to speak?

7. Which of these sentences is correct?

There are two Germanys

There are two Germanies

There is two Jairmanies

There are too many germs

8. An umpire decides (wrongly) that a batsman is out, caught behind the wicket. The fielding captain recalls the retiring batsman and play is resumed. Ten minutes later the captain (who is now bowling) is hit for four successive sixes by the batsman in question and promptly informs the umpire that he wishes to rescind his previous countermand. Is this cricket?

9. If all the bus tickets issued in London on a single day were laid out end to end how high would they be?

10. To-day it is uncommon to find a man of forty or more years who will open a conversation with the gambit "I'm Featherby-Upcloud of Marrow—Coker's Crowd, Big House. Who are you?" Does this, in your opinion, mean the end of collective farming?

## Technical Conference, London, Summer 1944

IT'S gone. Gone by. Not for us.  
But it was pressing low and imminent,  
pressing with great urgency, but it was not for us.  
And now we feel a little foolish to have run like that  
in a mass, seeking the shelter of the wall.

And lifting our heads from between our shoulders  
we grow wise with comforting, flattering,  
entirely inaccurate estimate of distance and direction.  
Shrugging free from the tendrils of honest fear  
we enter, bravely, the shelter of the tube.

A comforting enveloping sense of protection,  
the greasy stuffiness and doctored gale  
friendly and receptive. How fortunate, we confide to  
ourselves,  
to continue our journey underground! We smile on the  
mothers  
nursing children on the slatted bunks.

The train crashes in and away,  
indexing satisfactory progress with its stopping.  
A stop too decisive—"All change!" Damn! we had  
forgotten.  
We stand frustrated and unmounted, the head of our  
monster  
coyly licking the floodgates.

Up and out from our protecting burrow,  
out to the morning light again  
grumbling at the old paradox: "During an Alert  
passengers may leave the danger of the tube for the  
shelter  
of a bus in Northumberland Avenue."

But I'll forsake both tube and bus  
to walk, enjoying as always the Embankment.  
A sultry day, and small boys spread long legs  
from the steps of a shelter, wishing their legs would  
stretch  
across the road and into the river.

But the tide is low, the river distant,  
and boys would flounder in flats of mud.  
The sky's muddy—another—beyond the river:  
I'll keep account, that's three—muddy skies,  
Hun's weather, Hitler's weather.

Another, but well away—that's four.  
Strange how they grow from the noises of the traffic,  
and ears grown more than sensitive may yet be tricked  
to false alarms. Is it from prestige or personal whim  
the policeman in Parliament Street has no tin-hat?

I arrive, late, but not the last.  
So, are we all met, pat.  
"Gentlemen, the purpose of this discussion"—how large  
the windows!  
Strange never to have noticed before, and my eye  
notes the absence of absorbent cover.

"The advantages we may obtain  
in the use of such material are, firstly,  
perfect homogeneity"—this will be five—

"homogeneity"—that was five—a quandary, all the  
fingers  
of one hand now told, with the other I am writing.

"Second, the virtue of great hardness  
coupled with low coefficient of expansion,  
resistance to acids save only hydrofluoric"—  
how the windows rattle and how wisely Miss Driscoll  
departs each time for the inner office!

"With concentrated phosphoric a special case  
and poor resistance to most alkali"—  
one, two—"transparency, stability are important"—  
nine, ten, eleven—the new type—  
it may be twenty—yes, twenty.

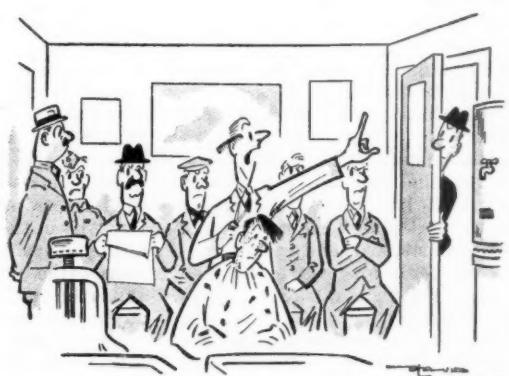
With detailed discussion of mechanical matters  
there falls a lull—"Vertical spindles,  
self-packing glands, and rotors conveniently arranged  
to ensure dynamic balance"—a long lull.  
"Many brought down in the sea."

The lull continues, the talking's ended,  
Miss Driscoll returns and we depart.  
But walking down Tothill Street the ringing bells  
accompany dutiful descending Civil Servants,  
but the men at the doors seem exempt.

As we reach the corner it seems very near,  
near indeed, and we peer around  
for surely we shall see it. And I have strange previsions  
of rectangular needles of blast, from horizontal serrations,  
featuring the Ministries' classical frontage.

But it's not to be seen—visibility still QBI,  
and there's not any blast, for it's gone through the Park.  
In Queen Anne's Gate we wait and pause,  
wait with a tin-hatted messenger—it happens;  
going she mutters "You've had it."

I've lost my count, though that was idle,  
but two things remain to be done—  
a walk to discover if the tide's filled the river,  
and I'm anxious to see if there's yet any paint  
on the Treasury's new long doors.



"You're next, Sir!"

## Little Talks

I HAVEN'T heard quite so much of that joke about Calais lately.

*What was that?*

Don't you remember? Stalin was supposed to have rung up Winston from Calais and said: "When are you coming over? I'm here."

*I know. We may still ring him up from Berlin.*

I still see some of those brainy messages chalked up on the walls in 1942—"SECOND FRONT NOW."

*The Trafalgar Square Brigade? Perhaps they'll pipe down now.*

Not they. There are still one or two civilian wizards who maintain that the entire strategy of the Allied war has been wrong from the beginning, and they'll be moaning and muttering the day we enter Berlin.

*When you realize what we've had to do it's a little difficult to see how we could have done it sooner.*

That won't worry them. Because it's been easier going than we all expected they'll say "That shows we were right. It wouldn't have been so difficult as you said in 1942!"

*Forgetting that what made it easy was what we did in the meantime.*

Quite. It's like saying an egg would have been just as good if it had been boiled for half the time.

*It must be fun to be an implacable critic in time of war.*

It must. The technique is very interesting. You curse the Government up hill and down dale for not doing something or other that any Government in its senses must at least have thought of doing. But they can't say they're doing it—because of secrecy. So the critic has the field to himself. Then, when it's revealed that the Government's been doing it all the time the critic claims it was all because of him.

*Too easy.*

Look at the *Tumbril* and the maquis. *What is the maquis, by the way?*

I believe it's a plant that grows in Corsica. Why it should be the name of a patriotic body in Paris I can't say. But never mind that. For a few weeks the *Tumbril* has been accusing the Allies of "neglecting" the maquis, not thinking it mattered, and so on.

*Whereas, for at least a year, I gather, we've been dropping arms and equipment into their laps.*

Quite. Not to mention the brilliant diplomatic stroke by which it was arranged for the F.F.I. to take Paris themselves.

*Does the "Tumbril" say "Sorry" now?*

Not a bit of it. The *Tumbril* merely pats itself on the back; and still accuses everyone else of having neglected the maquis.

*Wonderful. Wasn't it the editor of the "Tumbril" who said that the victory at El Alamein was a great mistake?*

Somebody did, I know. But I forgot why.

*Because it allowed Rommel to get together with the Huns in Tunis.*

Bad show. And, if I remember right, it was "a great mistake" to capture N. Africa, Sicily, and most of Italy.

*I believe it was. We should have left the Mediterranean to the Wops, sent all our shipping round the Cape of Good Hope—*

And at the same time used it to invade the Continent.

*Well, thanks to the critics, no doubt, the news is pretty good.*

Yes. What makes me laugh more than anything is the failure of the Samson act.

*How d'you mean?*

Well, Hitler said: You may think you'll drive me out of the occupied countries, but if you do we shall fight all the way and every yard will be a ruin. I shall pull down the pillars of the European temple and crush the lot of you.

*Which, through the unfair arrangements of our generals, he's been unable to do.*

Yes. And now he's reduced to saying that if we get into Germany he'll fight every yard of that accursed country. Samson pulling down the pillars of his own house on his own family doesn't make much sense—and might not be very popular in the home.

*I wonder why he keeps up this last-ditch line.*

Preparation for the next war. It's all in *Mein Kampf*. The idea is that anyone who surrenders will never rise again. But if you fight, you do. Here you are—page 368. He got it from Clausewitz: "The stigma of shame incurred by a cowardly submission can never be effaced. The drop of poison which thus enters the blood of a nation will be transmitted to posterity." But "Even the loss of its liberty after a sanguinary and honourable struggle assures the resurgence of the nation and is the vital nucleus from which one day a new tree can draw firm roots."

*So the poor devils at Boulogne and Calais are now engaged in fighting the next war?*

That's what it comes to. And there's a lot in it. Look at the "good"

Germans—if any. They've submitted to the thugs so long that they simply can't do anything else.

*Oh, come, you must remember the Gestapo, and all that. I'd like to see you—*

I agree. I should be terrified. And that's the excuse that everybody makes for that mythical body of men, the "good" Germans. But, after all, there was a Gestapo in France, in Belgium and Holland—presumably more ruthless because they were in conquered countries. Well, we know what's happened—the people got things going, in spite of the Gestapo. But, so far as we know, there's no maquis in Germany. There may be, of course. Perhaps we shall hear about it when we get in.

*When we get into Germany they'll all be "good" Germans. There won't be a man who ever had a good word to say for the Nazis. Goering will be commander-in-chief of the maquis.*

Well, that's where my Gallup Poll will come in.

*Your what?*

When we've thoroughly occupied the Reich—odd, by the way, that the very name of the place sounds like an expectoration—we'll have a poll of the people—not a Gallup—and we'll say: "Look here, you all say you're 'good' Germans. If you're 'good' Germans you must (a) disapprove of all Germany's crimes and (b) be willing to suffer and pay for them. Now, just tell us, each of you, voluntarily, how much you think you ought to suffer and pay. How much income-tax, for example? Should France have the Rhine? And the British the Hock? By your answers we shall know just how many 'good' Germans there really are."

*Jolly good show. Especially the Hock.*

Oh, that stands to reason. Whenever you suggest any way of dealing with Germany some economic ass says it will ruin us. But there can't be any argument against our having eighty or ninety per cent. of the Hock.

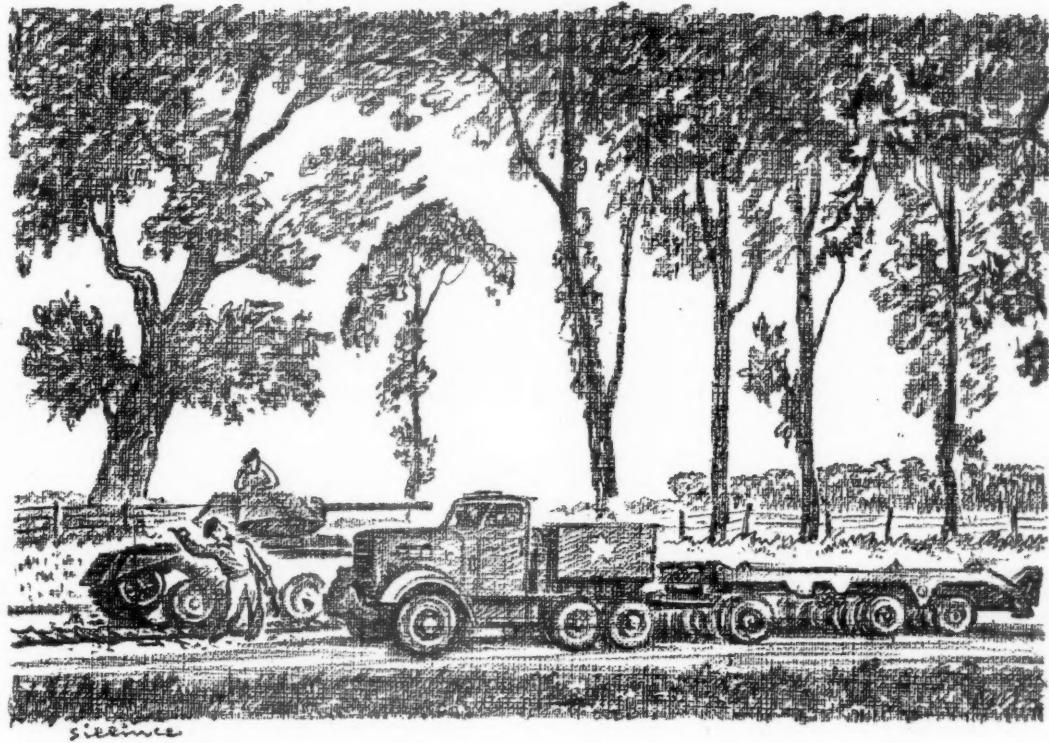
*I don't think many Germans would vote for that.*

Then there can't be any "good" Germans. By the way, why is it always assumed that Germany must be occupied by the British, the Russians, and the Americans?

*Why not?*

Because it would be much better done by the Czechs, the Poles, the French, the Belgians, the Greeks, and the Dutch.

A. P. H.



Simeon

## Winning the Peace.

WELL, old boy, let's get back to work and draft our next W.E. Let me see . . . Ah, yes Administration of Leipzig. H'm, biggish town, isn't it? Better have a brigadier in charge. . . . What's that? Old Hallingbury-Jenkins? Excellent idea, damn good feller, charming wife too. That means we must have Johnny Pinkleworth as his chief of staff. They get on awfully well together. Made an excellent job of that Waaf's Balloon Storage Camp in Sevenoaks.

Yes—the Brig. and Johnny. How many departments shall we want? Administrative and Personnel. Quartermaster. Liaison . . . We've got a list somewhere, we can look it up later. I suppose we shall want a major for each.

How big is Leipzig anyway? Ring up young Stokes, will you? He might know. Used to spend his holidays abroad before the war—Ostende or somewhere. . . . What! Over a million! Good lord, we must have a major-general! . . . What's that? . . . I

couldn't agree with you more: Hallingbury-Jenkins must be promoted. He's the obvious man for the job. That means the heads of the various departments must be lieutenant-colonels. Let's give them each a couple of majors. No, three's better. Now dammit, a major cannot be expected to fill in his own forms, so each must have two captains and a normal quota of clerks.

And while we're on the subject of forms, old boy, I do think it's important to have the *right men* in this sort of job. Staff-officers are what we want. Fully-fledged staff-officers. Men who know what staff-work means and don't get their forms filled in wrong. None of these young irresponsibles. I feel most strongly about that. Besides, the German ex-officers—some of them of high rank—who form the local authorities will expect the manners they are accustomed to—especially at receptions. Think of the way they laughed at the Bolsheviks at Brest-somewhere-or-other in '17.

Well, now we'd better think about some German-speakers. I suggest half

a dozen of these young Intelligence lieutenants that have been hanging about doing nothing in the past five years. . . . Yes, I see your point. Why not second-lieutenants? Or better still, a sergeant per bread-point and two second-lieutenants on motor-cycles to inspect at 0930, 1400 and 1830 hours daily. Do the young whippersnappers good to get up early!

Well, that's Leipzig. Where is Leipzig, by the way? Ask Miss Pralleyborne to look it up in *Whitaker*, will you, old boy. . . . Saxony? M'm, on the North Sea coast, I suppose. . . . Angles and Saxons and all that. . . .

• •

### "OLDEST TWINS"

Edinburgh, Friday.

Five sisters, Mrs. Janet Reekie, of 16, Harriet Street, Kirkcaldy, and Mrs. Henderson, of 25, James Street, Pittenweem, who claim to be the oldest twins in the country, have just celebrated their 83rd birthday."—*Egyptian paper*.

Absolutely unique, in one way and another.

## At the Play

## "THE BANBURY NOSE" (WYNDHAM'S)

The *Hume-Banbrys* of Chevern are soldiers. They have always been soldiers—one hero to a generation, named either Reginald or Algernon and distinguished by his cold blue eye and the jutting promontory of the Banbury Nose. With that nose a boy must be a soldier and nothing else; at his nativity the front of heaven is full of fiery shapes; from his cradle he is in the battle-line, under marching orders from the family portraits in the Great Room of Chevern Abbey. The *Hume-Banbrys*, always fighting fit, have been settled at Chevern, so they claim, since Senlac; no civilian, lesser breed without the law, can fail to wince beneath the centuries' arrogant scrutiny.

It is this ancestor-worship, this tyranny of custom, that Mr. PETER USTINOV now rails against in a play which slides back from 1943 to 1884. ("Life," he quotes from Kierkegaard, "can only be understood backward. But it must be lived forwards.") Thus *The Banbury Nose*, which opens with *Lieut-General Reginald Hume-Banbury* as a scarlet storm-trooper, last blaze of his Blimpish dynasty, ends with him as that blither spirit, the subaltern of sixty years earlier, a vain rebel against the Chevern code. During the march backward Mr. USTINOV wittily and mercilessly lets drive at parental intolerance, family pride, the evil of keeping a sensitive boy confined to barracks. He protests too much; he repeats himself; his *Hume-Banbrys* stray into caricature, and he does scant justice to the soldierly virtues. Even so, the piece is mordantly amusing and at times affecting. Mr. USTINOV solves his technical problems with assurance. He is at his easiest during the codgers' conference of the first act; no other dramatist is so absorbed in change and decay.

Just now Chevern is in gloom; withered is the garland of the war. It is some years since the youngest *Hume-Banbury* (Mr. RICHARD WORDSWORTH), man of brown eyes, tilted nose,

and Left-Wing opinions, came back from the International Brigade without his right arm and with a Spanish wife. No hope there for the family portraits. Only the *General*, now over eighty, is left on guard—left to hold the Banbury Nose above a stiff upper lip, while the vicar faces him nightly across the chess-board and *ex-C.S.M. Vickery*, coffee and temper on the boil, snaps to attention at the door.

*Reginald Hume-Banbury* is of course a prize for Mr. ROGER LIVESEY, who first took the Low road in the film of

thoughts, who interrupts a sitting with Alma-Tadema (one likes Mr. USTINOV's choice of artist) to whoop on the hounds. More alarming still is the snarl of Mr. LYN EVANS as the company-sergeant-major turned family-butler. He appears as both son and father, and his younger *Vickery* explodes like a grenade in the Great Room of Chevern. J. C. T.

## "THE LAST STONE" (PHOENIX)

The tale of Lidice, the forest mining village of Czechoslovakia destroyed and unpeopled by Nazi vengeance, is one of the war's harshest tragedies. It is not possible yet to represent it fittingly upon the stage. Although we cannot doubt for a moment the sincerity of the Czech author, Mr. EMIL SYNEK, for whom Lidice is a symbol of his country's martyrdom, his play fails to stir our deeper emotions. Tragedy here flares into melodrama. The old schoolmaster, the Prussian captain (secondary villain to an officer of the Gestapo), the heroic engineer and his no less heroic wife—all these are shown to us as lay figures of the theatre, unable to convey the darkness and the sorrow of the plain tale of Lidice as it is written in the records of the war. This is not a theme for conventional treatment: in a stiff-jointed English translation Mr. SYNEK's play must embarrass rather than inspire.

There is one good performance. Mr. JOHN SLATER manages to give some feeling to a poor part as the engineer who controls



THE MARTINET

*Vickery* . . . . . MR. LYN EVANS  
*Major-Gen. Algernon Hume-Banbury* . . . MR. ALAN TROTTER  
*Lieut.-Gen. Reginald Hume-Banbury* . . . MR. ROGER LIVESEY  
*Rev. Guy Saunders* . . . . . MR. HUGH BURDEN

*Colonel Blimp*. Here again he has the right presence, vocal volume, and breadth of manner. His performance, sharply understanding, is reinforced by those of the two friends who retreat with him down the years—Mr. HUGH BURDEN as the square peg of another family, a parson who dreamed once of charging romantically into battle, and Mr. MICHAEL SHEPLEY as a *Major* who tries to mix arms and the women. Miss URSULA JEANS, as *Reginald's* wife, grows younger gracefully; Mr. ALAN TROTTER is a dolorous sight as the *Hume-Banbury* failure, a mere Deputy-Adjutant-General; and Mr. ERIC MATURIN glowers and grates as a Victorian Colonel, man of slaughterous

the freedom station of Lidice. As his wife, Miss MILA REYMONOVA, fighting an unfamiliar language, makes heavy weather of her scenes; the producer has permitted his German officers, a brisk pair of thugs, to boom and bark with unremitting monotony; and Mr. CHARLES GROVES struggles with the schoolmaster who chops logic at tedious length when the bravest might well have been mute. Although he suddenly substitutes action for speech this reformation comes, alas, too late to save the audience. The shot that kills the hectoring Prussian in the market-place may bring down the house: unhappily it brings down the curtain as well. J. C. T.

## This Talking at Breakfast

**S**UCH a funny thing happened yesterday, daddy."

"Did it, my lad? An even funnier thing happened six years ago to-day. Did you know that?"

"What happened?"

"Your mother and I met."

"How did you meet?"

"Your mother planned it. She followed me around all day."

"Shall I tell you what happened yesterday?"

"No, darling. And what your father means is that we both walked in circles, and the question of who was in front will always be a matter of opinion."

"Surely . . . a matter of fact."

"But how did you *meet*? One of you must have turned round and seen the other."

"The papers had announced that sensible and law-abiding citizens would do well to avoid the park. There would be a great press of people. The full strength of the Metropolitan Police would be massed in side-roads, where they would take off their helmets and have tea from field-kitchens, or in doorways."

"Yesterday, daddy . . ."

"What I am telling you about was called Munich-time. When you go to school you will be told more about it."

"What was Munich-time?"

"It was something we had before double summer-time, darling. At least I think it was. I rather forget when double summer-time really started."

"The Park, at any rate, was a solid mass of sightseers. Banners were flying . . . collections were being made . . ."

"Like Salute the Soldier?"

"Very similar . . . and into this commotion the papers had said people would greatly oblige by NOT bringing children or prams."

"That is why you weren't there, darling."

"One reason, certainly."

"Why was daddy there?"

"It is a good thing I was there. For one thing there was a dog-fight."

"Well, yesterday, daddy . . ."

"Never mind now, darling. Listen to daddy . . ."

"At all events I came on the scene, Peter, just as a woman was screaming, and people were scuttering out of the way in a panic. And I just went up and grabbed the dog which seemed to be winning."

"I remember even now thinking how

wonderful daddy was, dear, until he explained that he had backed the other one."

"But where did you *MEET*?"

"There have to be dogs at every meet, Peter, only they are called hounds."

"Why?"

"I have no idea. At all events, I choked the winning dog till it released its grip, and then I hit it and off it went like a streak, and the next thing was that the woman it belonged to was coming after me with an umbrella."

"At Munich-time, you see, umbrellas were very, very fashionable, darling. Everyone had them, and you could even buy souvenir ones in the street."

"Were you the woman who hit him, mummy?"

"Not that day."

"Do pay attention, Peter. The crowd closed in, and some, believing this woman's absurd version of an incident they had not even seen, were beginning to make threatening noises, when a most beautiful girl suddenly pushed herself forward to defend me."

"Was that mummy?"

"How did you guess? Because I said she pushed herself forward?"

"Your father of course was always for holding back. That is why he had got mixed up in the thing at all."

"Your brave mummy ran amongst this frightful mob, and what do you think she told them?"

"Yesterday . . ."

"She said: 'Oh, don't all be so silly! He didn't hurt the dog, and anyway that was the dog that started it! It would have killed the other one. You might as well say,' she went on, 'that if a horse falls down in the street it's cruel to hold its head, or that if you are trying to save someone from drowning, and they struggle and pull you under, it's wicked to knock them out, in order to save their lives.' There was one man in the crowd who shouted 'Shame!' and so your mother turned round on him as she would if you said 'Shan't!' 'I suppose you don't even know,' she told him, 'that when a baby is born you have to hit it to make it cry so that it fills its lungs with air.'"

"Did they smack me?"

"Yes, but not enough. 'Or,' your mother said, 'that if it has convulsions you have to dip it in hot water.'"

"Did they dip me?"

"You are always in hot water, Peter."

"'Well,' said your mother to end the matter, 'I know there is only one

way to stop a dog-fight . . . and that this was it.' So the crowd melted away, thoroughly ashamed of itself . . . muttering. And your mother walked off."

"Was she muttering?"

"I think she was chewing."

"But you still haven't *MET*."

"Well, I went after her to ask how it was that any girl so very sensible should be out to-day in spite of all the warnings . . ."

"Your father's one idea, you see, darling, was to get into conversation at any cost . . ."

"And what do you think your mother said? She said: 'As a matter of fact I have just realized I am not so sensible at all. . . . In fact,' she said, 'I am easily the silliest person here. . . . Your mother was standing by that time with her hands in the pockets of a white macintosh.'"

"Dust-coat."

"Rain-proof . . . looking into the distance, and saying: 'Oh, I have been such an unbelievable idiot!' So I said: 'You haven't come on the wrong day, surely . . . like everyone else?' 'No, but I have come out,' she said, 'and left a kettle on a high gas.'"

"What did you say?"

"Your father made one of his most intelligent remarks ever, darling. He said: 'It should be quite hot by now.'"

"And your mother said: 'Hot? The kitchen will be full of steam . . . the water will boil away . . . then it will burn a hole in the kettle, and fill the place with black smuts and steam . . . and some of my loveliest things are hanging up there to dry!'"

"But, daddy, it is such a funny thing . . . do let me tell you about yesterday . . ."

"Don't you want to know how we dashed home in a taxi?"

"But yesterday we were *out*, daddy, and we saw two dogs fighting . . ."

"Be QUIET, darling!"

"Indeed, Peter, and what did brave mummy do?"

"Nothing, she just stood staring, and she said: 'I don't know why that should remind me of it . . . but I've got a terrible feeling, Peter, that when we came out I forgot to turn off the electric iron . . .'"

"Tell me, dear . . . the iron would not *still* be standing I suppose anywhere near the trousers you were going to press for me to wear this evening?"

"Now don't make a fuss, dear, please, in front of Peter. After all, you did love me for the very same thing, once."



"I've forgotten what a steak, being grilled, sounds like."

### Our Booking-Office (By Mr. Punch's Staff of Learned Clerks)

Bernard Shaw

BERNARD SHAW describes his *Everybody's Political What's What* (CONSTABLE, 10/-) as "a Child's Guide to Politics." Some of its readers, when they get to the last page, may feel like the child who said to its mother—"I think I could understand if only you wouldn't explain." In the course of his survey of everything from Mozart to miscegenation and from local government to the problem of evil, Mr. SHAW, partly through his natural wit and partly through his acquired training as a public speaker in the art of riveting attention, is always lucid, forcible and stimulating. But his words do not reverberate in the reader's mind and heart after the book is done. He is not moved by Mr. SHAW because Mr. SHAW is not moved by him. Men to Mr. SHAW are not individuals but the component parts of a machine which needs certain adjustments before it will begin to work efficiently. There was, Mr. SHAW says in his opening chapter, plenty of pessimism in the world before Karl Marx—the book of Ecclesiastes, for example, Shakespeare in *King Lear* and *Timon of Athens*, and Swift in *Gulliver's Travels*. But none of these writers could "document the case from official sources as Marx did." When he had read the reports of factory inspectors, Karl Marx knew, what Swift did not know, "the whole truth of the condition of mankind." It follows, according to Mr. SHAW's reasoning, that we have only to conform with Marx's proposals for a new world to place ourselves for ever beyond the conditions which made Swift, in his imperfect state of knowledge, despair of mankind. There are two objections to this argument. In the first place Swift, living in Ireland during the period of the penal laws and the ruthless commercial exploitation of the country by England, knew much more about misery in its material forms than Karl Marx learnt from reading Blue books in

the comfortable circumstances his friends procured for him. In the second place, Swift's despair was due to causes which would not have been affected by any change for the better in Ireland's political and economic arrangements. This Mr. SHAW would of course deny, for the foundation of the optimism which still sustains him is his faith that there is nothing in life beyond the power of a competent organizer to put right, and no suffering which an equitable distribution of wealth would not cure. Had Christ, he says, understood the capitalist system, he would not have attacked wealth but capitalism, and would have seen that it is easy for a rich man to be virtuous, and desperately hard for a poor one.

H. K.

### Young China

The drawback of the artist whose youth has been cornered by total war is that he is apt to find action more absorbing than art. Yet even novel-writing demands an apprenticeship; and that is why it is hard to foretell whether, when peace returns and she grows up, Miss LIN TAIYI, who was seventeen when she wrote *War Tide* (COLLINS, 8/6), will make her mark as a novelist. Her book puts clever reporting at the service of a girlish patriotism and feminism, and displays sufficient recognition of the foibles of age to render its older generations just a little more than foils to the younger. The brother of her heroine, *Lo-Yin*, is married the day war breaks out, mainly through the exertions of a grandmother who refuses to see the family extinct. The household then devotes itself to escaping from the Japanese, *Lo-Yin* putting up a running fight to avoid being married off herself. Finally a young airman, turned down as too masterful, is accepted when he loses his arm. It is hard on a good fellow like *Shen* to be thus fortuitously broken to petticoat government; and one is a little suspicious of the insensitiveness that can bring down so triumphant a curtain on so dubious a triumph.

H. P. E.

### Evergreen Oak

General Sir IAN HAMILTON makes no secret of the fact that he is no longer young. He has gone so far and so fast in the last ninety years that although he has already written autobiographically more than once it is possible to be pleasantly assured that his latest retrospect—*Listening for the Drums* (FABER, 18/-)—does not exhaust his amazing material. In this volume, though a good deal of space is given to his close friendship with Lord Roberts, he is mainly concerned to recover, with inside information as it were, the point of view of a dashing young soldier of the eighteen-seventies let loose on an India, very large, very primitive, very complacent. He is indeed so successful in reincarnating the bumptiousness of the subaltern of the period that the affectation of flippancy with which he presents him becomes the book's one defect. But he is never of course really the average officer. Whether it be in praying for a good wife—at the age of five, in making himself a master of Asiatic tongues, in having ideas all his own in the matter of musketry training, or in tumbling head over heels, unhurt, with a runaway elephant upset by being bitten in the rear by a supposedly dead crocodile, he is always just himself, unrivalled and perennially young.

C. C. P.

### In Retrospect

Mr. MICHAEL SADLEIR'S "spiritual adventures," as they are termed on the jacket of *Things Past* (CONSTABLE, 10/-), might seem of a somewhat tentative and circumscribed kind to William Blake or Saint Teresa. Considered as an

evocation of what has given the author happiness in life and books, or as a graceful retreat for the reader from what Mr. SADLEIR calls "the evils of this most evil time," the essays in this volume fulfil their purpose very satisfactorily. In his sketches of Emil Verhaeren, W. B. Maxwell and the Balliol historian, Henry Carless Davis, all of whom he knew personally, Mr. SADLEIR may be too radiantly and unremittingly appreciative for some tastes; and the same criticism could be made of *Ville de Province*, in which he writes of France as "a lover and a friend." More alive and real, on the whole, are the six studies of Victorian writers which occupy the first half of the book. Three are concerned with women novelists, George Eliot, Mary Elizabeth Braddon, and Rhoda Broughton, and these display Mr. SADLEIR at his most perceptive and least sentimental. The difficult position of Dr. Chapman, the amorous editor of *The Westminster Review*, between his wife, his children's governess and George Eliot, all living under the same roof with him, is excellently described. The probability that Miss Braddon as a young woman "lived a fuller and a more hazardous life than has been (or is ever likely to be) recorded" is investigated without pushing conjecture too far; and the merits and limitations of Rhoda Broughton, both as a woman and a writer, are brought out in a clear and sympathetic analysis.

H. K.

#### Poems from "The Bell"

*Irish Poems of To-day* (SECKER AND WARBURG, 5/-) sets out to show—on the scale imposed by there being only twenty-five of them—how Irish poetry has fared since the death of Yeats. Yeats's own view of the chances of the younger generation was, one remembers, jaundiced. The Catholic morality he found "only possible for saints"; the Irish people were "not educated enough to accept images more profound . . . than the schoolboy thoughts of Young Ireland"; and "the slow perfecting of the senses which we call taste was not even begun." It is the taste, however, that has made most headway, for the fervours of Catholic morality and Young Ireland have found no comparable successors. A lyric as exquisite in poise and pattern as Cecil Day Lewis's "Hornpipe" will outlast, one wagers, all the heavier intimations of mortality of his fellow-poets. One solitary rendering from the Gaelic is less happy than Kuno Meyer's crib for the same poem; but there is imperative irony in Roy MacFadden's "Plaint of the Working Man" and delightfully meditated topography in Geoffrey Taylor's "Boat-Haven, Co. Mayo" and W. R. Rodgers' "Ireland" with its "minute and blazing parachutes of fuchsia." For all its intellectual scrappiness this is a book to buy—the more so as its modest price goes to a writers' charity.

H. P. E.

#### How to be a Writer

Mr. MICHAEL HARRISON has retained his affection for the works of Mr. Michael Arlen rather longer than the rest of us, but he is now outgrowing his infatuation. Both the beginning and the end of it may be seen in *So Linked Together* (MACDONALD, 8/6), which describes the progress of a writer from Shepherd Market to Chelsea and should be an awful encouragement to other young writers. The novel consists of what the cinema knows as a "flash-back," occasioned by *Tancred Merrion*'s discovery of his first grey hair on his thirty-second birthday. It is a sobering moment, a moment in which to look appraisingly at the past and doubtfully at the future. *Tancred Merrion* does both. How much of his story—of poverty and desperate ruses and astonishing ways of making a very little money

indeed—is autobiographical it should amuse the reader to guess. What matters is that Mr. HARRISON makes it seem like invention. It is only half-way through the book, when he is no longer trailing clouds of glory from the early 1930s, that he speaks with, at last, the conviction of maturity. As this increasing depth coincides with an increasing sobriety of style, there is every prospect of Mr. HARRISON's next novel being the one he has always wanted to write. The present one can be summed up as, by turns, amusing, absurd, irritating, and profoundly touching.

J. S.

#### Gilt on the Ginger-Bread

Mr. C. H. WARD-JACKSON's book of short stories, *Bombs At All* (SYLVAN PRESS, 8/6), is presented in such uneven form as to make it difficult to begin the reading. The rare excellence of type, paper and margin makes us expect too much or too little, according to our natures. The fussiness and exaggerated "strength" of Biro's wood engravings make us suspect preciousness. The blurb—"This is the R.A.F. not only as it is roared through the air by the few but as it is served on the ground by the many—the simple banks and turns of an air-station's daily round and common task" is annoying and not very sensible; and the story headings from the Book of Joshua, Alexander Pope and (sometimes expurgated) Squadron Songs are confusing. It is a relief to read the unpretentious stories, mostly of good magazine level, that are lit up occasionally by humour and a telling sentence. The description of a fighter station as seen by a mess steward is excellent, so is the story of the Polish Squadron's dog, and the study of the devoted ex-ranker who became a group-captain. Possibly the author rather underdoes understatement when he is afraid of seeming sentimental, but his stories have truth and simplicity.

B. E. B.



"Look, Corporal Tippins, no one likes to be greeted of a morning by a nice vase of freshly-cut flowers more than I do . . ."

## Our War-Time Query Corner

Ask Evangeline!

**Q.** After a week's potato-lifting I am unable to straighten up. What is the best thing to do, as on Monday I return to my job—that of shop-walker at Fittham and Ruffit's?

WORRIED.

**A.** You would look odd walking, of course, and such a gait, even at this stage of events, might serve to awaken gloom and despondency in your fellow-workers; but there is nothing to prevent you *shop-crawling*. Indeed, the job of supervising others may be more efficiently pursued on hands and knees than from the upright stance, as wrongdoers will fancy themselves unobserved until they perceive their superior emerge from some low cover at startlingly close quarters; while the conducting of shoppers can be managed with perfect delicacy and correctness if you adopt a kneeling posture with a yard-stick in the hand to give the impression that you are taking measurements of carpet or lino. Avoid relinquishing your yard-stick even for a moment, or nervous patrons may suppose that an Alert has been sounded and follow suit, crawling under counters and show-stands in a way likely to hamper the smooth running of your department. Your evenings, I think, should be spent in some simple activity calculated to give play to a different set of muscles—distempering a ceiling, for example, might be fun, or would you prefer to spend from, say, nine to eleven opening and closing a manhole that is just out of reach?

\* \* \* \* \*

**Q.** My sister, an amateur hypnotist, keeps trying to get our sole remaining domestic (Florrie Tott) under her control. I contend that this is not doing the girl any good, because when asked how she would like to take up the Cambrai stair-carpet one afternoon next week and clean the paintwork round the French windows to celebrate the Allies' entering Paris, she showed anything but a bright face and said she didn't know which day she mightn't have to go home as her uncle by marriage had thrown himself into an E.W.S. tank and they were holding a portmanteau on him. Later, when my sister fixed her with her eye (poor Violet lost the other on a Manx pleasure steamer in 1920) and bid her go and bake some queen cakes from the recipe in *War-Time Cookery Without*

*a Cook*, she snatched from the shelf our complete *Mrs. Beeton*, though I murmured under my breath, "Miss Thriphorp says *not*," and, opening at a similar recipe which began: "Take ten eggs . . ." she stalked straight across to the grocer's and took them. I enjoyed the cakes, but have felt uncomfortable since. What had better be done?

META THRIPTHORP (Miss).

**A.** It looks to me as though forces had been set in motion in Florrie's under-mind which may spell ruin for the Thriphorps no less than the Totts. That is the danger of one-eyed hypnotism. She has been rendered allergic to *all but the printed word*; thus, unless your sister hastens over the same ground in reverse I do not like to think of the reactions of a person of Florrie's suggestibility confronted with the constant injunctions with which our little life is nowadays rounded—*e.g.*, Join the Naafi, Use Shanks' Pony, Zip Up Your Lips, Keep Right, Keep Left, We Want Your Cast-off Clothing, Leave Your Bones Here, etc. Where, one asks oneself, might not the girl end?

\* \* \* \* \*

**Q.** The last hope of the Pusley-Menpes (my nephew) has received his calling-down papers for the mines. Can you suggest an attractive décor for the apartment I am having prepared for him at Grisly Wold—preferably something that will keep him in tune with his work?

CORUNNA PUSLEY-MENPES (Mrs.).

**A.** The usherette daughter of the Marquis of Sylope and Stuwwes, after long hours in the Hippodrome, returns to a little sanctum of her own devising where everything that is not grey is black!—even to the soot-dark vanishing cream in the basalt pot; from the rich velvety blackness of new shoe-polish to those indescribable nuances sometimes to be found in the hat of an elderly tramp, the period suite and furnishings of such a very deep Indian-ink tone that it is as much as one can do to tell where dressing-table ends and duchesse set begins. Lady Morgue herself, as she laughingly told me, had tried only the previous night to go to bed in a large laundry-bag in mistake for her usual night-wear of dyed black wincey, and I noticed that she showed some hesitation in locating the door

when we had finished our survey and drunk a thimbleful of the home-brewed stout she keeps in a fluted Florentine flask in her bedside cupboard beneath frills of dainty black-out cloth.

\* \* \* \* \*

**Q.** My cabbages have no hearts. Some are so tall that I could take a deck-chair and sit under them.

E. CLAUDE JINKS.

**A.** Why not do so? As to your statement *re* cabbage culture, it is difficult to tell whether you wish advice or are simply out to impress other readers. If the former, we would need to know the facts of the case before we could make a pronouncement. Have a try yourself at rising from your seat without having first sat down and you will see what we mean.

\* \* \* \* \*

**Q.** I was mulching in one of our cold frames the other afternoon when it came to me in a flash that *of course* the best means of training up post-war Germany into nicer ways would be to transplant into the shopping centre of each of her townships a *typical British family*, complete with furniture. This family, living in a sort of glass-house (something like the show-place of the Dionne quintuplets), would provide a peep into that cosy, individualist aspect of democracy which our humbled adversaries will be encouraged to try to imitate. A single glimpse, for instance, might show Grandma in a little lace shawl knitting in the twilight, Father doing the football pools, Mother preparing a lecture on parent-craft for the Women's Institute, Sister Ann learning to be a beautiful lady, little Tinker lying on his back crooning softly, etc. Ought I to tell the Government?

(Mrs.) BESSIE MULCIBER.

**A.** Some people are nervous when watched, so it might be as well to find out first what percentage of families would be likely to stand the test, otherwise you might after a while get father knitting himself little lace shawls, grandma preparing to be a beautiful lady, little Tinker doing the football pools and mother lying on her back crooning, which is exactly the sort of thing one would not want to encourage in the Fourth Reich.

## High Level

### II

"HE'll want you to open all the mail," said D., "so that you can see everything that's going on."

"I see," I said, "but what about things that are addressed to him personally, or marked 'Confidential' or something?"

"Not a bit of it," said D. He selected a plump, good quality envelope from the huge heap of letters on my desk. It was addressed by name, marked "Secret and Confidential. On no account to be opened by any person other than the addressee." It was sealed with three dabs of purple wax. "Take this one, for instance," said D.,—"you'll find there's another one inside here." He slit the envelope deftly and extracted another and slightly smaller one; this repeated the instructions, underlined in red ink this time, and bore the impression of a rubber stamp which said peremptorily "SAVE PAPER!" D. slit the second one. "And in here," he said, "you'll find a footlong routine report from an old ass called Girdstone. It will start, 'Dear Chambers.' Old Chambers left here two years ago, but nobody's ever told Girdstone." He had unfolded the enclosure, and now he thrust it for a second under my nose. "Dear Chambers," it began. "See?" said D.

"I see," I said.

"You'll soon be able to pick them out. Here's another one, look, marked 'Urgent and Personal.' That doesn't mean anything, because I happen to know the typing. It's a circular about subscription concerts. Now, with a thing like that I advise you to find out tactfully how he feels about concerts this winter—lead up to it when you're out with him in the car some time; then you can either tear it up or slip it into his tray. It's a matter for discretion, a thing like that; the same as notifications of memorial services or film premières. There you are, you see." He flattened the circular on the desk. "Dear Subscriber," it began hopefully.

"But," I said, "won't he feel—I mean, isn't it rather—what I mean is—well, other people's letters and all that . . .?"

"Nonsense!" said D. firmly. "You've got to be in the know with all these things. Suppose he's on the phone one day and buzzes for you and sticks his hand over the receiver and says 'Quick! That letter last month about

plaster-board contracts! How many square feet was it?'—well, you have to have your answer ready, haven't you?"

"Oh, rather," I said.

"Oh, no, you just can't know too much. Why, only last week, when he had two generals in there, he buzzed and wanted to know whether Lichfield Cathedral had three spires or two spires and a tower. Not, of course," added D., "that there had been any correspondence about that; it was just a matter of general knowledge. How are you on general knowledge, by the way?"

"Well . . ."

"But still, I shouldn't worry too much about that. After all, he can't

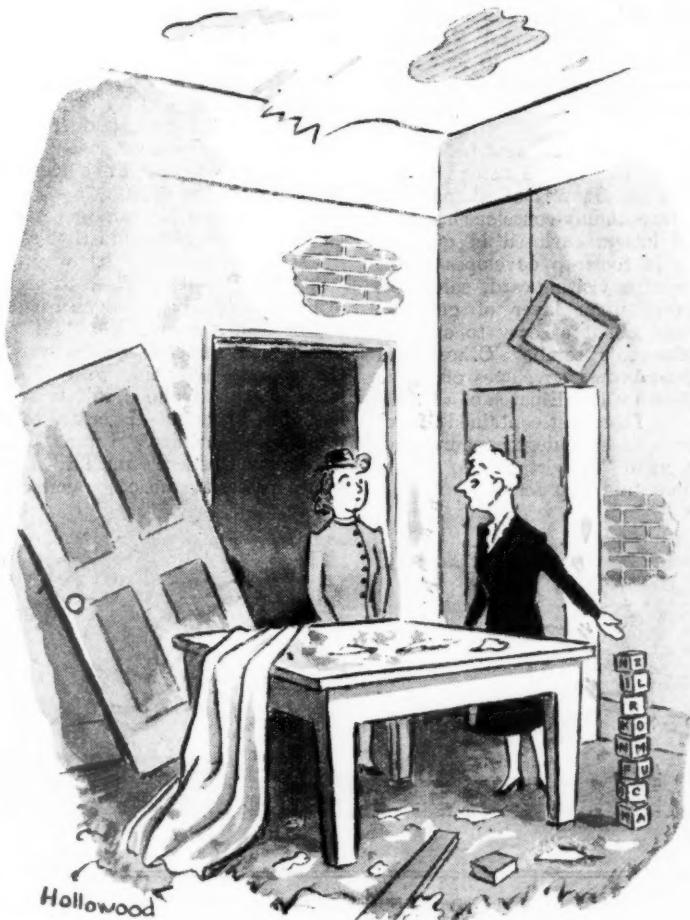
expect you to know things like the height of Snowdon or the date of the Matabele Rebellion—it's just that he sort of—well——"

"Expects it?"

"Well, yes. But what he really expects is that you know all about everything that actually comes into the department. It's as well to read all the minutes and files pretty thoroughly, so that if he isn't absolutely clear in saying what he wants you'll be able to pick out a word or two that will strike a chord, so to speak. See what I mean?"

"I'm afraid I—er——"

"Well, take an example. Let me



"And yet, you see, the child's bricks were hardly moved."

see, now . . . yes, I had a case last Thursday. We'd had a long Secret Minute from B.R.D.(c)3K about obtaining priority typewriters for an evacuated shipping firm in Carmarthen. That was some days before. Then on Thursday the buzzer went and there he was on the phone to Lord Britlesham. He put his hand over the mouthpiece and said 'Get me that newspaper cutting about the Welsh underwriters.' So I said 'Yes, sir,' and dashed into the office and got the B.R.D.(c)3K file. See?"

"Rather. Though I don't quite follow—"

"No. Well, that's just it. I knew the only newspaper he reads is *The Times*, and I always read it pretty thoroughly—as I advise you to do—and I knew there had been no mention of Welsh underwriters in it during the past month; but I did remember about the typewriters, and I saw that he'd got Underwoods and underwriters linked up in his mind, which led me to shipping, and the only shipping stuff we'd had in had been the Secret Minute from B.R.D.(c)3K. It's much simpler than it sounds, really."

I said I thought it must be.

When D. had gone I turned to the pile of mail. It was all shapes and sizes. The economy-conscious had contributed letters enclosed in quarter-sections of foolscap envelopes about the size of a visiting-card, thickened with layer upon layer of gummed labels and about as easy to open as Tutankhamen's tomb. Others had sent great brown envelopes of a size convenient for the dispatch of a breakfast tray. These last contained files of all colours, sizes and degrees of urgency, from a mere "Important" to "Most Immediate and Top Secret."

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I was reading a long and ungrammatical minute in one of these on the subject of Stray Dogs on Allotments when the buzzer buzzed and the indicator above and behind me was agitated wildly. When I entered the room he was looking out of the window, his back to me.

"There was a P.Q. on T.I. the other day," he said, peering down at the street. "Whose was it?"

"Yes, sir," I said, and stole out, closing the heavy door gently.

I sat down and lit a cigarette, pretending to be calm.

It would be a file, almost certainly. "P.Q." What chord did that strike? "P.D.Q."—yes, but—ah! why not? "P.Q.—Pretty Quick"—a degree of urgency, no doubt, to which I had not yet been introduced. But "T.I." . . . I felt like somebody; who was it? Of course—Malvolio with Maria's letter . . . Malvolio didn't know the half of it, I thought. I decided to bluff it out with the office. "I want," I said, "a Pretty Quick file on T.I." There was a pause at the other end of the

telephone before the voice said, "Yes, sir."

Presently the little man with glasses came hurrying in from upstairs. "I don't know whether this is it," he said, and placed a file on my desk. It was an "Immediate" file, and, I reflected, "Immediate" was just about the same as "Pretty Quick." Its title, I saw with a thrill, was "Telephone Interchangeability." "Fine," I said briskly, and hurried respectfully through the mahogany door. Flushed with achievement I placed it on that larger and emptier desk.

"What's this?" he said.

"You asked for it, sir," I said.

"For what?"

"For that, sir."

"I did?"

"Yes, sir."

"I didn't."

"No, sir?"

"I asked for *Hansard*. I don't want that thing. I don't know why you should think I want that thing. Get me *Hansard*, with a P.Q. on T.I. in it by somebody or other."

"Yes, sir."

Outside I knew that I should have to confess defeat.

D. looked grave when I told him. "That's terrible!" he said, "you mean to say that he asked for a P.Q. on T.I. and you take him in that confounded old defunct file? That's awful." He closed his eyes. "On the top shelf of your steel cabinet, extreme left, under the *Educational Reviews* but on top of the *Financier's Gazettes* is a pile of Parliamentary Reports for last month. The bottom copy but one, dated the 30th, contains a Parliamentary Question about Travel to Ireland. He wants to know who asked the question. All right?"

"All right," I said. J. B. B.



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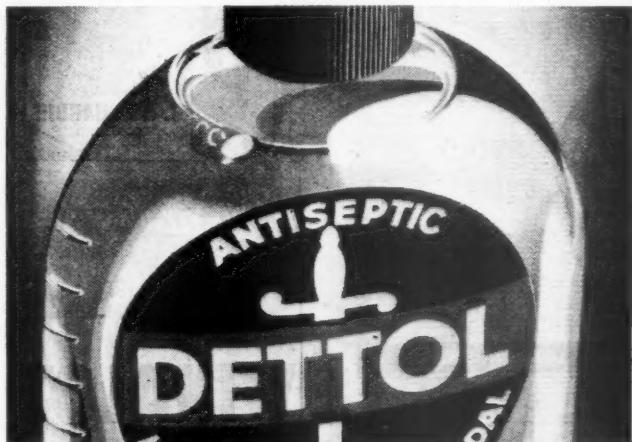
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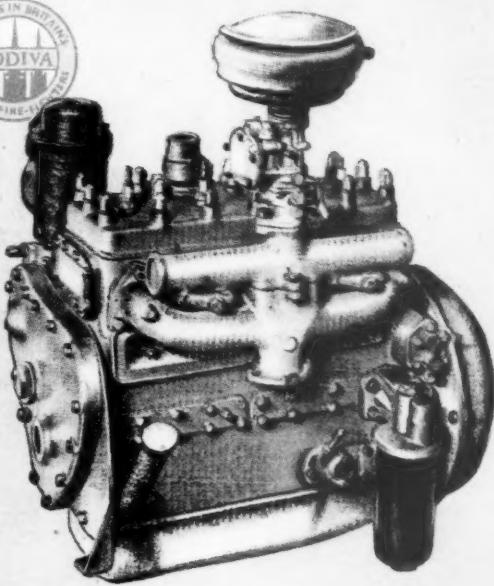


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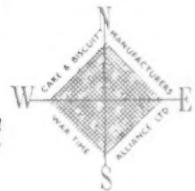
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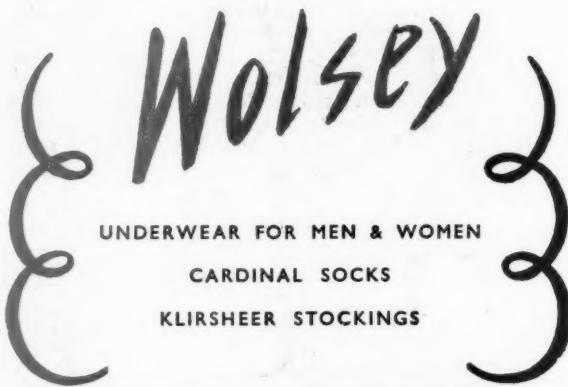


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